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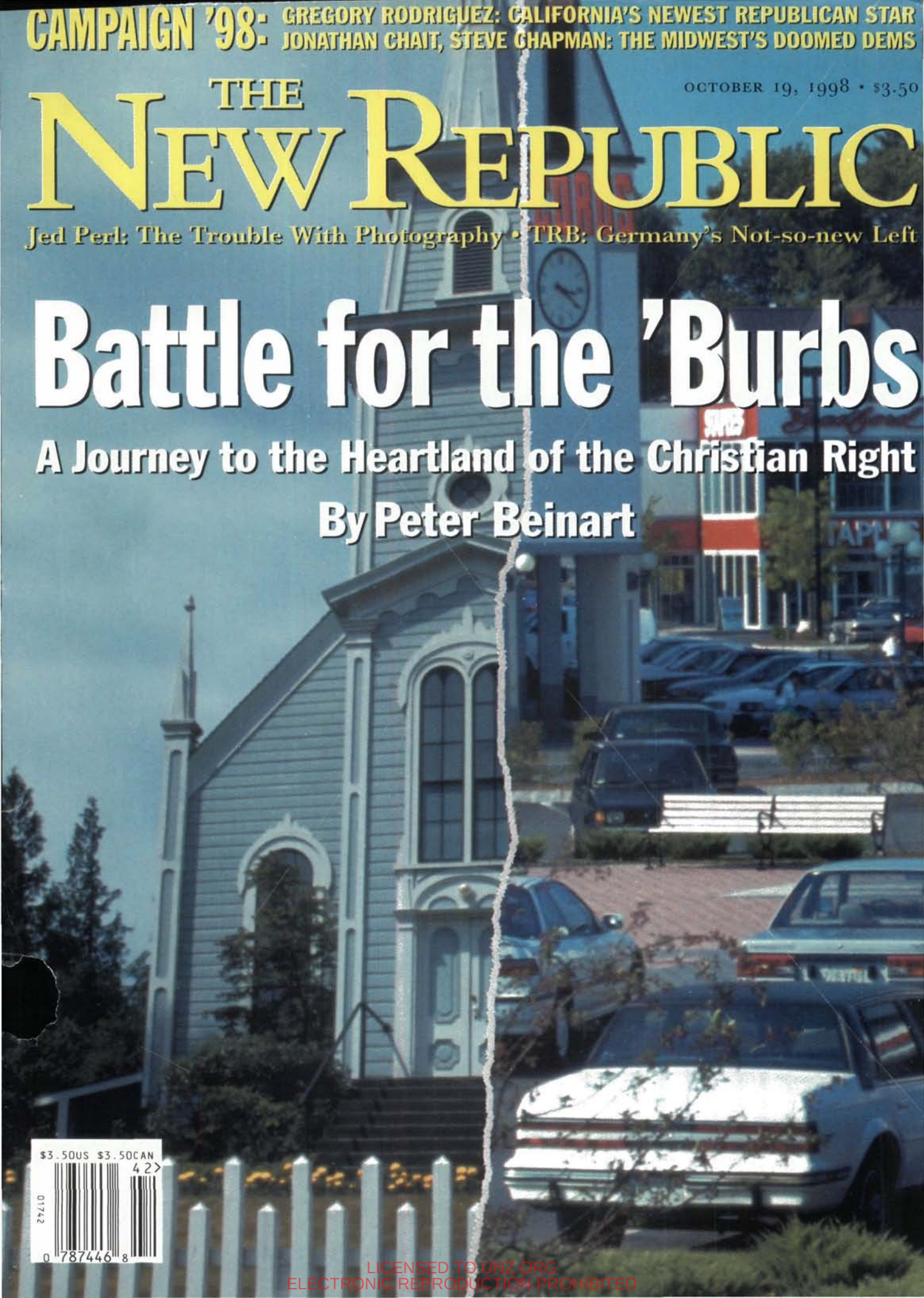

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Weekly Journal of Opinion

OCTOBER 19, 1998

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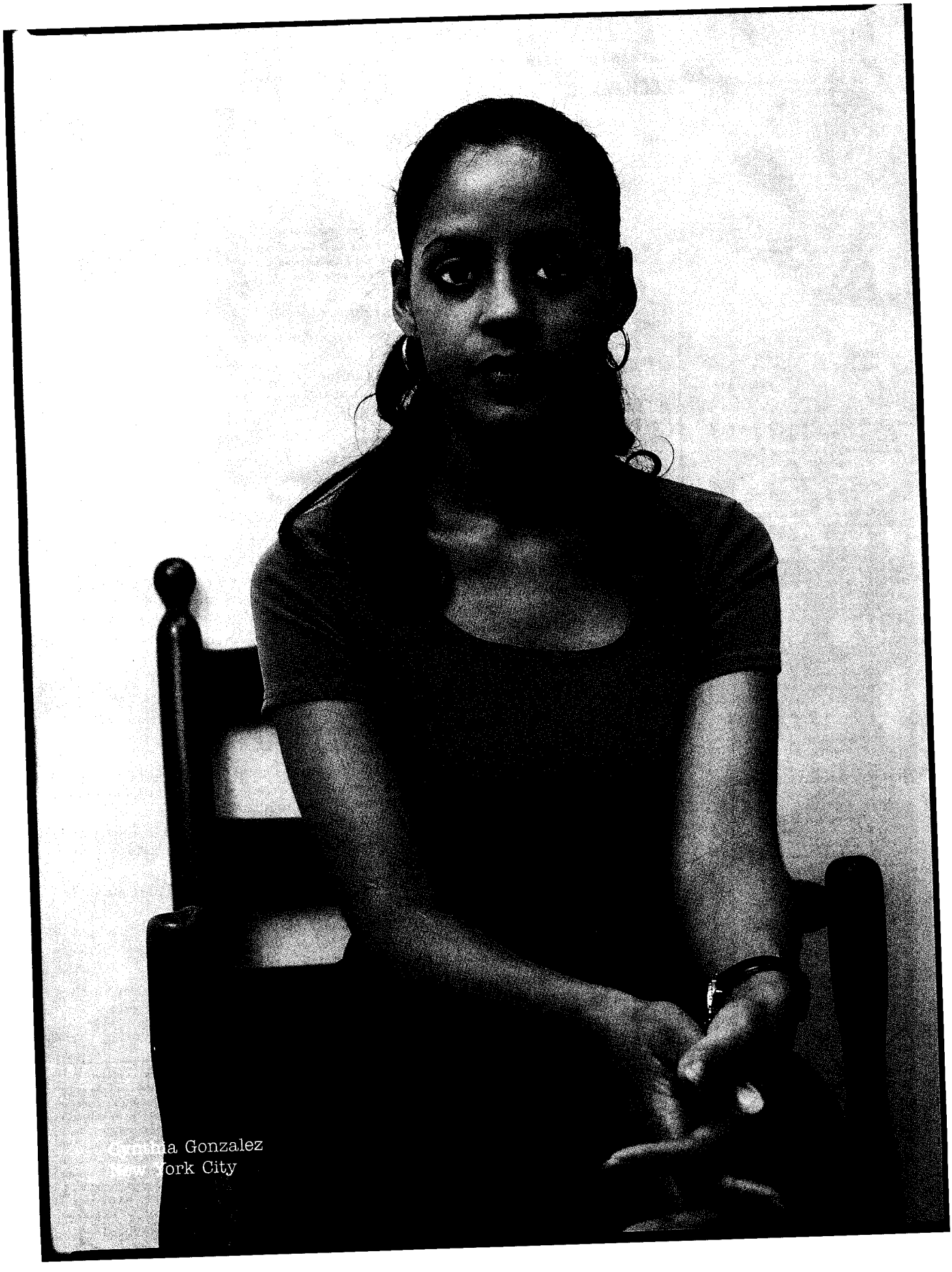

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New York City

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CORRESPONDENCE

Schippers's law

To the editors:
David Grann's profile of David Schippers captures his spirit ("The Truth About David Schippers," September 7). As someone who has worked with him, I know that he is a just and compassionate man. Aside from church, he holds no place more sacred than an American courtroom. Should compelling evidence of obstruction arise, prepare for Jonathan Edwards.

DENNIS M. TOBIN
Barrington, Illinois

To the editors:
Bravo for Sir Thomas More, and for David Schippers, if he grasps the difference between God's law and man's. But, if I were David Grann, I wouldn't deduce too much from More's tale: adultery may be contrary to God's law, but Clinton stands accused of perjury, subornation of perjury, obstruction of justice, and abuse of power, which are all contrary to *man*'s law. Clinton can keep his immortal soul for all I care; I just don't want to be governed by a felon.

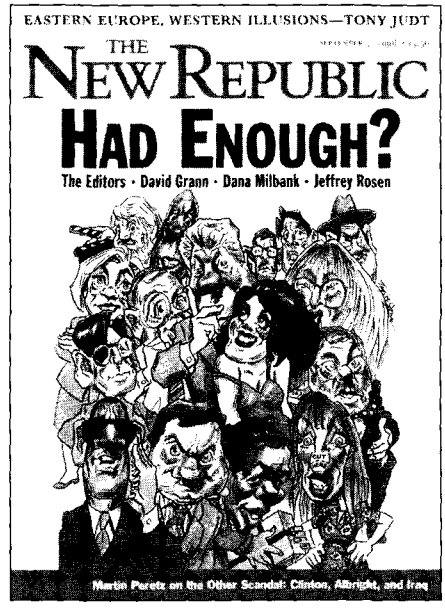
BRETT P. BELLMORE
Capac, Michigan

Sick business

To the editors:
Michael J. Sandel's rant against the viatical settlement industry (which buys out the life insurance policies of terminally ill policyholders for less than the policies' face values) illustrates nothing so much as the limited insight to be gained from moralizing about questions of economics ("You Bet Your Life," September 7). Sandel's diatribe contains only the briefest acknowledgment that viaticals provide significant benefits for cash-strapped, terminally ill patients. Sandel is therefore guilty of sacrificing the genuine needs of individuals—terminally ill individuals, no less—in order to achieve a far less worthy goal: tsk-tsking about the morality of profiting from someone's early death. Does Sandel really believe that a poor dying person who desperately needs the money should be prevented from selling his life insurance policy just so that we can prevent the coarsening of the culture and commodification of death that he thinks will follow?

PETER SIEGELMAN
Amherst, Massachusetts

To the editors:
In likening viatical settlements with Internet "death pools," Michael J. Sandel overlooks the multibillion-dollar annuity business, in which insurance companies pay a fixed sum to the person insured for as long as she lives. If the purchaser lives longer than expected, the insurance company loses money, because it pays out more than the purchase price plus interest. If the purchaser dies quickly, the insurance company makes a handsome profit. The insurance company is thus in exactly the same position as the viatical investor. In Sandel's words, "From the company's point of view, the sooner I die, the better." Does Sandel think annuity contracts have coarsened the


EASTERN EUROPE, WESTERN ILLUSIONS—TONY JUDT
THE
NEW REPUBLIC
HAD ENOUGH?
The Editors · David Grann · Dana Milbank · Jeffrey Rosen
Martin Peretz on the Other Scandal: Clinton, Albright, and Iraq

culture and made "death a commodity"? Are they a "moral wrong," too?

DAN KLERMAN
Los Angeles, California

Little justice

To the editors:
David Rieff's arguments against a permanent International Criminal Court are legally and politically off the mark ("Court of Dreams," September 7). Contrary to his assertion, war crimes committed in internal conflicts will be within the court's purview. Their inclusion was one of the main achievements of the Rome Treaty. In addition, the court's jurisdiction includes crimes against humanity, which may be committed internally both in armed conflict and in times of peace. So the court *will* have jurisdiction over "Saddam Hussein's war against the Kurds, Pol Pot's reign of terror, [and] the Rwandan genocide of 1994."

As for Rieff's claim that the future ICC will not have legitimacy, it is belied by the facts. An overwhelming majority of states—120—voted for the treaty. The fact that the United States chose not to do so along with Iraq, Libya, and China speaks for itself.

MICHAEL POSNER
Executive Director
Lawyers Committee for Human Rights
New York, New York

David Rieff replies:
The human rights movement's intellectual poverty is perfectly exemplified by Michael Posner's claim that the votes for the International Criminal Court of the representatives of 120 countries—very few of which are democracies or respect the human rights of their own citizens—are enough to give the court real legitimacy. Only in the rarified world of international law would such a vote be deemed authoritative. As for Posner's substantive objection: The court has jurisdiction only if nations sign on and do not renounce the treaty. Since a Saddam Hussein or a Pol Pot is unlikely to do either, I don't see how the ICC represents any great progress for humanity, even leaving aside the issue of lack of enforcement, which was the main thrust of my article.

To the editors:
David Rieff's "Court of Dreams" is a superb analysis of why the International Criminal Court won't work: it's a typical product of the politically correct multilateralists who refuse to acknowledge that only the use of power works in fighting crises against humanity. How is such a court to come to grips with the crimes of a Karadzic or Mladic when allied forces, including those of the United States but most particularly those of France and Russia, look the other way as the indicted Serbs prance about within earshot?

ROBERT B. GOLDMANN
New York, New York

No conflict

To the editors:
Martin Peretz foretells an Iraqi invasion of Jordan that, possibly in conjunction with a future Palestinian state, will menace Israel on its borders, prompting a direct conflict between Israel and Iraq ("Unscomscam," September 7). Saddam Hussein's "imperial pretensions," he warns, "are whetted by the sheer presence of a Jewish polity in the area."

Here's a more sober view of Saddam—a singularly ruthless, single-minded, power-obsessed strongman who, despite many lapses in judgment, quite correctly

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sees his best opportunity for greater power in three things: absolute control of Iraq; command of strong armed forces backed by weapons of mass destruction; and domination of the world's most strategic region, the Persian Gulf, with its oil and gas reserves—in that order. Israel, on the periphery, is to Saddam nothing more than an occasional check on his goals for weapons of mass destruction and a useful distraction from his own megalomania. He is unlikely to seek a contest in Jordan with little potential reward and slim prospects of success, jeopardizing Iraq's access to goods shipped through Jordan's Red Sea port at Aqaba and placing Saddam's best troops both uncomfortably far from Baghdad and at dire risk.

JOSH POLLACK
Baltimore, Maryland

To the editors:
I agree with Martin Peretz's observation that Madeleine Albright's move to stop surprise U.N. inspections constitutes proof of errant bias. I do not, however, agree with his assessment that Albright is pro-Iraq for taking this stand. In fact, I would argue the situation is precisely the opposite. The sanctions we have levied on that nation represent an eight-year, gunless (but bloody) war on Iraq. Would Peretz argue that killing the sick and elderly of Iraq through sanctions is pro-Iraqi and that the only unbiased action would be to bomb the people as well?

JOSHUA HILGART
Via the Internet

Balkan truths

To the editors:
Tony Judt makes some unjustifiable overgeneralizations about people from the Balkans ("Freedom and Freedonia," September 7). Judt holds up a suspicious intellectual as the representative of *all* Balkan intellectuals, who, Judt writes, have not "come to terms with their own damaged condition." Such a type exists, but there are plenty of Balkan intellectuals who hold just as much distaste for the type described as Judt does.

MATTHEW SINGER
Baltimore, Maryland

Getting real

To the editors:
It was a great pleasure to encounter Lee Siegel's brilliant essay "Persecution and the Art of Painting" (August 31). The names of nineteenth-century realists, the precursors of socialist realism, evoked a wave of nostalgia. Thanks for making a meaningful term out of what is often used as a synonym for kitsch.

PAUL M. CULP JR.
Huntsville, Texas

Empty space

To the editors:
In your notebook section of September 7, you write: "Just how do editors fill up so much space about a sex scandal whose principal subjects do so little talking?" Yet, for months, you have devoted as many as five pages per issue to Bimbroglio, wasting a far greater percentage of your available space than the newspapers you criticize. Can we hope that the end of this obsession is in sight?

LEE LEVITT
New York, New York

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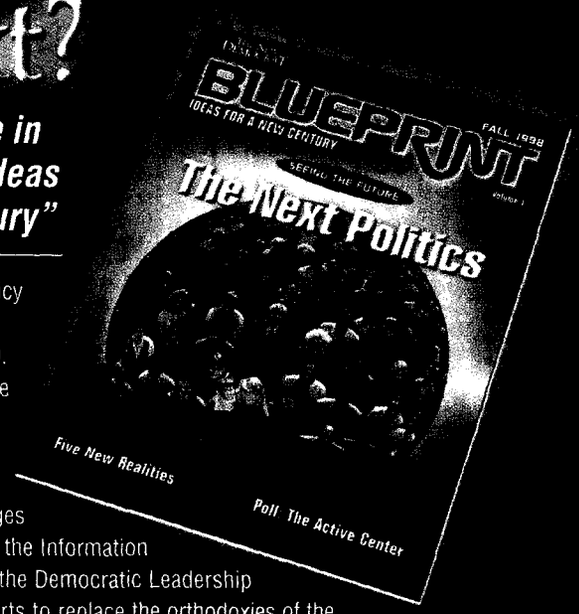

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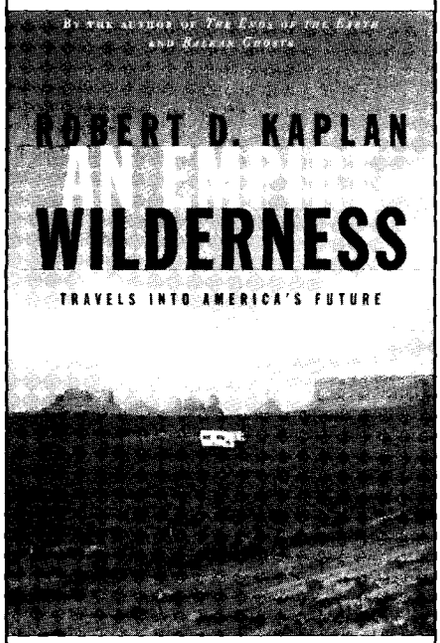
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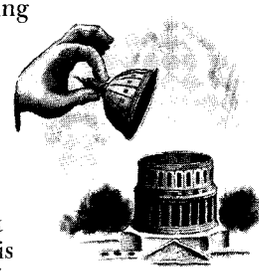
FROM WASHINGTON

No way

I'm just back from Germany, which is in a celebratory mood over the election of Gerhard Schroeder and his Social Democrats. The excitement is shared by the American press, which has welcomed the rise of Schroeder, avatar of a "New Middle," as a promising development akin to the 1992 triumph of the Clinton-Gore New Democrats and the 1996 election of Tony Blair's New Labor. Is a golden age of the Third Way finally at hand?



Sorry, but the answer, at least in Germany's case, is probably no. For one thing, Clinton and Blair inherited welfare states and tax systems that were already downsized, thanks to Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, respectively. Those two also did Clinton and Blair the favor of breaking the power of organized labor, thus removing a major obstacle to the ideological modernization of their parties. In Germany, by contrast, Schroeder inherits a barely reformed welfare state that was always much lusher than either England's or America's and is defended by entrenched interest groups, chief among them a still-powerful labor movement.

The reason for this traces back to the differences between continental European conservatism and the Anglo-American brand. Germany's Christian Democrats differentiated themselves from the left principally through a tougher approach to the Soviet Union and a more traditional approach to social issues like abortion and immigration. On economics, the German right was nearly as collectivist as the left, partly because of its communitarian ideology, and partly because of the belief, which all postwar German parties shared, that a strong social safety net would prevent the kind of public unrest that paved the way for Nazism. Thus, it was the conservatives, under Konrad Adenauer, the first postwar chancellor, who introduced the notion of a "social market economy" in West Germany—the original Third Way.

During his 16 years in power, Helmut Kohl left that system essentially intact. Kohl can boast of many achievements in foreign policy—preserving Germany within NATO despite heavy pressure from the left, negotiating German reunification, extending a united Europe. But his failure to modernize the social market economy will not be treated kindly by historians. By the end of the Kohl era, the World Economic Forum ranked Germany twenty-fourth among industrial nations in economic competitiveness.

Now it is up to Schroeder and the Social Democrats to make the tough reforms necessary to prevent Germany's social welfare system from cannibalizing its economy. The big campaign issue was the country's 10.6 percent unemployment rate. This crisis is largely caused by onerous taxes and regulations that make it too costly for German companies to hire German workers—instead, they move their factories to South Carolina—and by unemployment benefits so generous that many laid-off workers have no incentive to look for jobs. In Germany, pensions eat up nearly eleven percent of GDP. Government spending, much of it for lavish industrial subsidies, consumes half of the economy.

Unfortunately, the only specifics Schroeder offered during his campaign were promises to roll back Kohl's modest sick-pay reduction and labor-market deregulation. Schroeder also vowed to convene an "alliance for jobs" made up of representatives of business, labor, and government, which sounds like another one of those big talkathons our own president is so big on.

The main problem, however, is that Schroeder campaigned this way because the German public is so deeply opposed to any sacrifices. While Germans wanted a new chancellor—a healthy democratic impulse after 16 years of rule by the same man—in an Infratest poll conducted shortly before the election, more than 60 percent said they didn't want basic policy changes. Another poll for *Spiegel* magazine showed that only ten percent would accept lower pensions and only 30 percent would agree to help the country by working longer hours or by giving up a wage increase.

In America, we'd call for presidential "leadership" to change these attitudes. But Germany's consensus-minded pols shy away from that for historical reasons. (The German word for leader, remem-

continued on page 49

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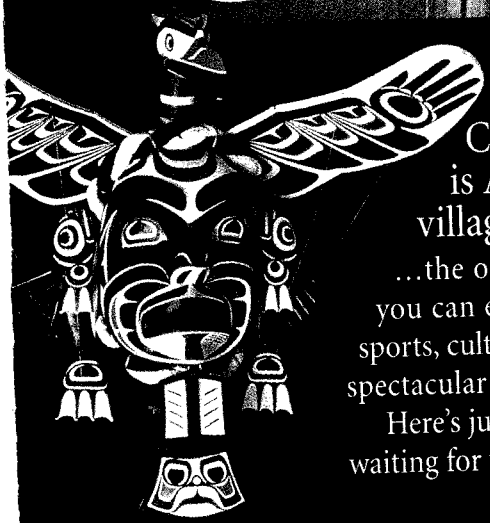

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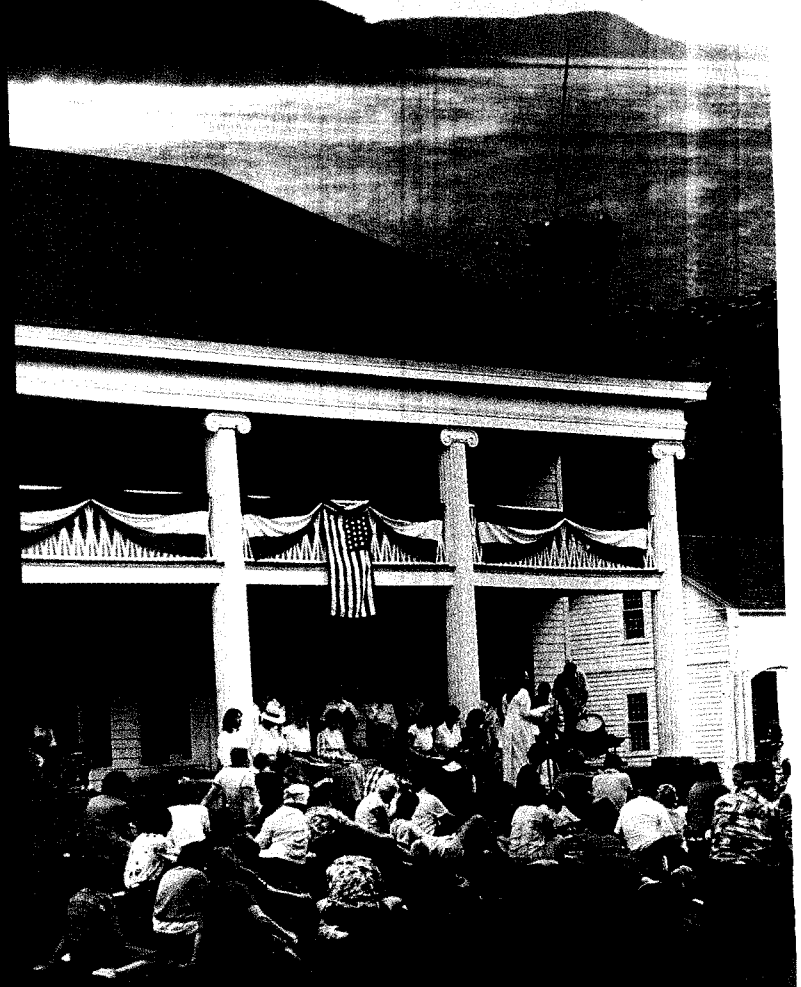

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

OCTOBER 19, 1998

POLICY BOMB

While Washington wallows in the drama of the semen-stained dress, Saddam Hussein keeps on building his secret weapons. And, apparently, the project has been going well—from his point of view. For a couple of years now, *The Washington Post* reports, Saddam has had three or four nuclear "implosion devices." And what, exactly, is an implosion device? Basically, it's a working atomic bomb, minus the plutonium or enriched uranium. Be assured that Saddam is in the market for some of that, too. Maybe he already has enough to turn the implosion devices into three or four 20-kiloton weapons, which could also help explain why he has been so adamant about keeping international inspectors out of Iraq for the past two months—with no effective response from the United States or the United Nations. The *Post* also reports that the United States, contrary to some of the Clinton administration's prior statements, has known about these implosion devices for months. The news about the Iraqi bomb program would also seem to make a mockery of past assurances from the International Atomic Energy Agency that Saddam's realm is a nuclear-free zone.

The entire UNSCOM project is basically in a state of collapse. Something similar might soon be said of the Clinton administration's effort to talk the Stalinist regime in North Korea out of building nuclear bombs of its own. The so-called Framework Agreement of 1994 was intended to get the North Koreans to freeze their weapons program in return for all sorts of Western-financed blandishments, including two new light-water nuclear power plants, fuel oil, and food for the starving North Korean people. But, of late, there have been signs that this deal, like the cease-fire deal Saddam accepted at the end of the 1991 Gulf war, isn't worth the paper it's printed on. The latest such indications were the North's attempted launching of a satellite using ballistic missile technology over Japan and the revelation that the North is building a gigantic underground nuclear installation.

Saddam's depredations against his own people are well-documented. The inhumanity of North Korea's regime is less widely appreciated, in part because current U.S. policy requires our government to maintain a polite silence about gross human rights violations, lest the talks with North Korea be upset. At last, that unworthy silence is being pierced. Shortly after the United States announced an increase in food aid to the North (despite the attempted satellite launch), Doctors Without Borders, the respected French aid group, announced that it was pulling out of North Korea. The reason: The North Korean government was denying the group access to starving children who desperately need medical help. Doctors Without Borders believes that the U.S. food aid is being channeled to people loyal to the regime. Meanwhile, severely malnourished homeless children and orphans are herded into "9-27 camps."

American food aid to North Korea, like the gaping humanitarian exception to the economic sanctions against Iraq, is proving to be a serious, if well-intentioned, policy mistake—too easily exploited by evil regimes, not helpful enough to the suffering masses. "In truth, we don't know what we're doing," an American official working on the Korea policy conceded, pathetically, to the *Post*. "We're just sending in lots of food and hoping against hope." Actually, the United States has the capability to determine exactly what's going on in the North; American spy satellites could determine the location, size, and condition of the allegedly horrific 9-27 camps, if only the intelligence agencies were instructed to focus on them. Has anyone in the White House thought to give such an order?

To be effective, American proliferation policy must be informed by a sober view of the moral nature of the governments doing the proliferating. Perhaps recent bomb-testers India and Pakistan, relatively democratic states that care about being members in good standing of the international community, can be swayed by such gestures as Clinton's canceling of his planned visit to the subcontinent. But Iraq and North Korea belong in a different category, and, for all their indignant rhetoric, it's not clear that the Clintonites truly grasp that.

"Let's imagine the future," Bill Clinton told a group of military officers at the height of his showdown with Saddam Hussein last February. "What if he fails to comply and we fail to act, or we take some ambiguous third route, which gives him yet more opportunities to develop this program of weapons of mass destruction and continue to press for the release of the sanctions and continue to ignore the solemn commitments he made? Well, he will conclude that the international community has lost its will. He will then conclude that he can go right on and do more to rebuild an arsenal of devastating destruction. And some day, some way, I guarantee you he'll use the arsenal." That future, alas, is now. •

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NOTEBOOK

INVESTMENT CHIC: Everyone knows that it takes money to make money. Now, thanks to the collapse of Long-Term Capital Management, we know that it also takes money to lose money. Indeed, LTCM is a wonderful example of how special investments marketed to the rich are sometimes, indeed often, worse than the everyday investments pitched to the middle class. Consider: To buy into LTCM, you needed at least $10 million. For that, you got a spectacular 40 percent return in 1995 and 1996 and a strong 17 percent in 1997. Then, in 1998, you got a 90 percent loss. On the other hand, a little guy who called a 1-800 number and put his money in an S&P index fund would have received almost as high a return as LTCM from 1995 to 1997—the geniuses at Long-Term Capital were barely beating the market. This year, the S&P index investor would be up about five percent, with little risk of catastrophic losses. It's as if LTCM were just a classy racket to lure the rich into a high-risk gamble rather than taking the far more sensible position of simply buying equity—which, by the way, is probably more helpful to the economy as a whole. But the wealthiest and most sophisticated people in our society can't be that easy to gull, can they? Well, LTCM's not an isolated case. Lloyd's, another exclusive repository for investments by the wealthy, has also crashed and burned. Meanwhile, the discount brokerages chug along. No doubt many wealthy investors shudder at the prospect of investing in funds that (gasp!) advertise on television. Alas, sometimes status anxiety gets in the way of sensible investing.

UNTRUTH IN ADVERTISING: With the Kyoto Protocol, the international agreement that would cut so-called greenhouse-gas emissions, still awaiting submission to the Senate for ratification, the Competitive Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank based in Washington, D.C., has launched a series of radio and television ads meant to arouse public sentiment against the treaty. One of the spots, called "Remember the Gas Lines," features a carbound couple impatiently waiting in a long line to purchase gas. Sadly, though, before they can reach the pump, both the gas station and their car run out of fuel. An empathetic narrator intones: "Thousands of scientists agree there's no solid evidence of a global warming problem. But there's a global warming treaty in the works. It could mean higher gas prices, more rules, even rationing—the seventies all over again, only worse." Now, we're not too annoyed by that remark about "thousands of scientists"; it's the same know-nothingism the industry's been peddling for years. While it's technically true that many scientists question global warming, it's also wildly misleading. The overwhelming scholarly consensus is that the phenomenon is real; the mainstream debate is mainly about the magnitude of climate change. But the "seventies all over again—only worse"? *That's* a frightening prospect. Shame on the Clinton administration for not disclosing that the Kyoto Protocol mandates the return of stagflation, Barry Manilow, the Partridge Family, and Jimmy Carter.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The image of the police badge on the cover of the January 19, 1998, issue of TNR was taken from a source unrelated to the subject matter of the article in the magazine. TNR did not intend to associate the police officer whose badge number was displayed on the cover with the article about the District of Columbia's police department in that issue of the magazine. TNR regrets any confusion that may have been caused by this cover. •

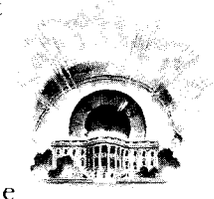
WHITE HOUSE WATCH

RAHMBO

By Dana Milbank

Surveying the current state of uncertainty in the White House, one can't help but wonder whether things would be different if Rahm Emanuel were alive.

In the corporeal sense, of course, the presidential counselor is still very much above ground. But, as far as the White House is concerned, its veteran cheerleader is history. On the day the Starr report hit, as the White House scrambled to respond, Emanuel had more important concerns: his wife had just given birth to their second child. And, at the end of October, Emanuel will quit his job to take a teaching post at Northwestern University. Colleagues insist Emanuel remains busy. But, by definition, a short-timer can't plan for the long term.



And therein lies a problem, because long-term strategy is what the White House desperately needs now. "I get the feeling they're very much living day to day," says one outside adviser. Another pronounces the president's policy offensive "moribund," adding: "I don't think they know what they're doing." When the Senate killed a minimum-wage hike last week, for example, the president mustered only a brief written statement saying he was "disappointed," as if the Razorbacks had lost a game. Each morning, Chief of Staff Erskine Bowles gives senior advisers his usual "stay focused" plea, though invariably the scandal talk, which Bowles saves for the end of his

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meetings, colors everything. "There's only so much air in the room, and it's been sucked up by this," says one participant. "It's hard to blast out the message."

Clinton himself has tried to start the blasting in recent days, eschewing his now-habitual remorse for an assault on the do-nothing Congress. And, as the rest of the country has begun to affirm White House staffers' long-held faith that the president will finish his term, Clinton advisers have dared to peek out of their foxholes to talk about the future. One senior adviser last week told me how he was trying to quit his full-time Starr habit. "I haven't spent more than five or ten minutes—wait, let me think about this—maybe an hour at the most, on any of the Starr matters today," he bragged. I admired his willpower. But, then, it was only lunchtime.

So far, the White House has assembled only a short-term plan. First comes the showdown with Congress over taxes, Social Security, education, and the environment—and Clinton has nothing to lose. Republicans can either fight him, thus changing the subject from scandal and risking a repeat of their disastrous stand-off in 1995, or they can let him have his way just to keep the focus on Bimbroglio. "We're going to fight to the finish," says one top aide. Next, after Congress's adjournment and before the election, the president will hold a series of bully-pulpit events in the White House to portray Democrats as legislators and Republicans as investigators.

But that is the easy part. Whatever Clinton does now, the GOP still stands to gain seats in November. The next phase, therefore, is crucial: how to take back the initiative from what is almost certain to be a still-Republican Congress. Emanuel, on his way out, has been discussing such things with the president. He recently wrote Clinton a memo proposing a concentrated campaign on Social Security, Medicare, tobacco, education, and foreign policy. Some Clinton advisers think the president should, before the election, give the voters a "mini State of the Union," as one puts it, outlining specifics for next year's agenda. Policy-writers object, saying there isn't enough time to roll out a new policy agenda.

The emerging solution is a December policy offensive, similar to last January's, in which Clinton unveils a series of executive orders that bypass Congress. The model, Clintonites say, will be the president's executive action on an HMO patients' bill of rights. Clinton signed an order this year that protects some 30 million public-sector workers and Medicare and Medicaid recipients from HMO abuses—and it didn't take any action by Congress. Bruce Reed, the domestic policy adviser, is scouring the landscape for more areas in which executive actions could have the same effect.

The difficulty is in finding somebody who can coordinate the guerrilla insurgency necessary to take the advantage back from Congress. Rahmbo would have been the man. Like George Stephanopoulos before him and, to an extent, Dick Morris, Emanuel made such ad hoc crusades his specialty. That's why Emanuel's departure, though long-expected, is worrisome. There's nobody else who has the same knack for getting things done.

The possible Rahm replacements are Paul Begala, an early Clinton man who returned as a strategist last year, and Doug Sosnik, another political adviser who has himself contemplated leaving. Both are said to be vying for Emanuel's shoebox adjacent to the Oval Office, with Begala's name mentioned more frequently. Both are more approachable than the notoriously arrogant Emanuel, but neither is a policy man. Word in the West Wing is that neither will fully replace Emanuel, leaving his duties dispersed. "It will take two or three people," says one senior official.

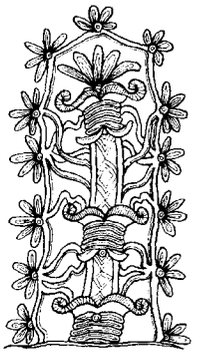
As a result, it may fall to the next chief of staff to take on Emanuel's role of spearheading the policy offensive. Erskine Bowles is expected to leave by the end of the year, and most bets for his replacement are on John Podesta, unless things get so messy on Capitol Hill that Clinton needs to bring in an outside "wise man." There's also talk that Steve Ricchetti, who was just hired to fortify Clinton's scandal team, might then take Podesta's job as deputy chief of staff. But the promotions of Begala and Podesta, like everything else in the building, are far from certain. The decision can wait a month. And, by the minute-to-minute standards of this White House, that might as well be an eternity. •

THE HARD QUESTIONS

POLL POSITIONS

By Jean Bethke Elshtain

It's hardly news that polls are looming ever larger in our civic life, threatening, at this critical juncture, to overwhelm our capacity for reason, discernment, and judgment. After all, we know that polls have already played a key role in the unfolding scandal—most memorably when President Clinton first asked his consultant, Dick Morris, to test whether the public would forgive a president for lying under oath about sex. (The answer, a qualified "yes," helped set in motion all the shenanigans, rhetorical contortions, legalistic hairsplitting, and "I have sinned" confessionals of the past eight months.)



What is a little surprising, however, is that many close observers of the American scene argue that the vast influence of polling, whether in this scandal or in general, is a good thing. I mention this because just such an argument appeared on the op-ed page of *The New York Times* last week. Under the headline "POWER TO THE POLLS," Frank Newport, an

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editor-in-chief of the Gallup Poll and thus hardly a disinterested observer, could scarcely contain his enthusiasm for the truth of polls: *vox populi, vox dei.* He took issue with any and all naysayers, including Congressman Henry Hyde, who had said, "Poll-taking is an art, not a science." In Newport's opinion, those who suggest we take polls with a grain of salt, or even ignore them altogether from time to time, are arrogant: "Why should we assume that pundits and elected officials know more than the average American or that careful scientific polls don't accurately measure public sentiment?"

Although few others put the argument in such stark terms, many commentators and public officials have argued against impeachment, resignation, or even censure for the president merely on the grounds that the people don't want it that way—again, according to the polls. Members of both parties are said to be calibrating their strategy based on survey results and not so much on their own ideas of right and wrong. Is this a good thing? According to poll-populists, the answer is a resounding "yes."

This is, in a sense, a familiar argument. Those impatient with the compromises and mediations of democratic civil society have long believed that direct democracy would be preferable. Some have even proposed bringing technology to our rescue by holding instant plebiscites via interactive television and telepolling. Think what it would do for the scandal: Should we impeach the president, force him to resign, or embrace him as a sincere man who feels our pain and now feels his own as well? Press the button of your choice. Should we sally forth on yet another bombing mission or not? Just let us know.

But direct-democracy advocates fail to realize that the point of American democracy is not simply to express the people's will or even to assume that such a thing exists or could be articulated in a way that would protect individual rights and minority viewpoints. The point of our system is to put some distance between the people and their leaders, to temper the whims of the majority, and to allow officials to make independent judgments—even though it means explaining such decisions later.

The Clinton scandal, far from undermining this argument, shows why it makes sense now more than ever. Consider Newport's most revealing sentence: "In a Gallup survey conducted this month, 63 percent of those surveyed said that, on the question of the possible impeachment of President Clinton, members of Congress should stick closely to public opinion, rather than doing what they themselves think is best." In other words, Congress should do what the polls say the public wants because a poll said that is what the public wants. Isn't this what used to be called a tautology? If anything, following this strategy would be profoundly anti-democratic, if democracy is the making of political decisions following a period of airing of alternatives and extensive, careful deliberations of the possible effects of one action or another.

It is true that many people feel powerless. As Stephen Carter writes in his recent book, *The Dissent of the Governed,* citizens increasingly believe that "their petitions to their government go unanswered, and, as a result, [they] have lost a degree of faith in that government." But polls simply highlight powerlessness. To participate meaningfully as citizens, not as ciphers voicing a passing "sentiment," citizens must be part of institutions that enable them to express complex opinions. Responding to simplistic yes-or-no questions and then demanding that politicians obey is a political form of cheap grace. We cannot restore faith in our political system by treating elected representatives like marionettes.

In the context of the Clinton scandal, that means elected representatives should do what they are supposed to do: investigate, gather the facts, and then deliberate about what course of action to follow. While the public should be consulted, no lawmaker should act *simply* because a Gallup poll he read in today's newspaper gave him his marching orders. The American people surely want their elected officials to do what they—the officials, that is—think is best, hopefully after listening to the informed petitions of politically engaged citizens. If this is not in fact the case, we are in even more trouble than we realize. •

MOSCOW POSTCARD

BRAIN HEMORRHAGE

By Masha Gessen

"We've decided," one of my closest friends informed me. "You are the only person we'd sell the house to."

"Didn't know you were selling."

"We've decided," she persisted. "We are leaving the country." I assured her I wasn't in the market for a house, nor was I interested in staying in Russia after everyone I knew left. Some days, though, it seems like I may not have much choice: for a thirtysomething professional, staying in Russia promises a future of solitude.

Since the revolution of 1917, Russia has seen four major waves of emigration, three of which devastated the country's intellectual resources. In the five years following the revolution, the country lost most of its nobility and much of the intelligentsia. (Soon thereafter, Stalinist purges took care of those who had remained.) The 1970s saw the exodus of about half a million Jews, a disproportionate number of them highly educated. The emigration of the late 1980s and early 1990s introduced the term "brain drain": among the hundreds of thousands who fled the disintegrating Soviet Union were many of the country's scholars, computer scientists, and other intellectual professionals. The current economic crisis

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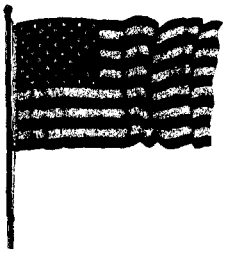

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threatens to rob Russia of those who stayed behind—because they were too young or too curious about what would happen next or too in love with someone who was too patriotic—as well as those who returned home after working or studying abroad.

"The odd thing is, I never seriously considered leaving in the past," says 36-year-old Sergei, one of Moscow's hippest admen. "But, in the late eighties, I did not have social standing to lose, and I did not have a child and didn't care that you couldn't buy Pampers here."

Back then, like most of his friends, he was a starving poet. Now most of his old mates live abroad. The few who are still in Russia have entered the middle class, the one whose recent emergence was much celebrated locally and which seems to have deflated completely over the past five weeks of crisis. A Versace raincoat is draped over the armchair next to Sergei; a cup of overpriced cappuccino sits on a side table next to his cell phone. The phone is still hooked up; he still has a job with a large Western agency; and, unlike most of the rest of us, he has not even taken a salary cut. Nonetheless, he is making plans to move either to Prague or Israel. (Just in case there is a chance of keeping his job, he asked that his real name not be used.) "My wife said we could live like before, wearing an expensive old coat until it frays, bringing food with us when we go to visit people, and take the time to read lots of good books. I could even write again. But I don't want to—and, anyway, I have a child now."

To understand the pain people like Sergei feel at the prospect of raising their children amid the same deprivation they knew back in Soviet days, you have to appreciate the joy young professional Muscovites felt as their lifestyle took shape. "I was the middle class!" 31-year-old Viktor exclaims with the sort of pathos usually reserved for more revealing pronouncements. "I was the kind of person who could go to places like this after work." We are talking at an Irish-style pub—one of scores of newly sprouted yuppie hangouts here—across the street from one of the offices of the bank at which Viktor works as a top manager. Unlike about a fifth of the bank's staff, he still has his job, but he has taken an 87.5 percent pay cut; and he fears his bank will go under. He is looking for work in New York.

"Eight years ago, half of my university classmates left the country," Viktor says. "I didn't go because I was in love with someone who didn't want to leave, and then I got this job at the bank. Now it's happening all over again: every conversation turns to the topic of emigration." This time, Viktor refuses to be left behind. "Seven years ago, when I came to work at the bank, we had ten or fifteen people on staff, and I took care of our three computers. Now we have eight hundred on staff, and I'm one of the bosses. And, if I am going to be forced to start from the beginning again, then do you really think I would do it here? So they can take it all away again in another seven years?"

One of the special features of the Russian middle class is that they have never ceased to see the state as an adversary and have generally believed that they succeeded in spite of the state. Now they are convinced they are failing because of it—even though those who are top bank managers could reasonably be expected to assume a bit of blame. As a result, many Russian businessmen have preferred to store their nest eggs outside the country—not just in offshore bank accounts but, for example, in foreign real estate or business investments that entitle them to residency permits.

Hungary and the Czech Republic, where real estate purchases and a small additional fee bring a residence permit, have become increasingly common destinations for Russians. A large enough investment—generally $1 million—in the U.S. economy also entitles one to a green card. Several years back, a very successful Russian businessman told me he had secured a green card—not because he planned to leave the country but because, as he said, "There can be no doubt that, one of these days, *total darkness will descend upon Russia.*" He moved to the United States in August.

People of more modest means had smaller stashes. A 27-year-old TV-producer friend who attended graduate school in France put the $35,000 he had saved for an apartment in a French bank. After he returned to Moscow two years ago, he resolved to put off buying a place until he was sure he'd landed a good job. In mid-September, having signed a contract with a Swiss radio station, he left Moscow, thanking the deity all along that he had neither spent the money nor transferred it to a Russian bank, where it would surely have disappeared.

Here then is another feature that distinguishes the Russian middle class from any other: It is utterly unencumbered by financial entanglements. Over the seven years of reform, no Russian bank has set up a regular mortgage-lending program. Everything the middle class bought—from cappuccinos to cars—it bought with cash, and all the cash it had it spent. As a result, "It's not that I really want to leave," says Igor, a 31-year-old freelance interpreter who now finds himself in a market with many interpreters and few visiting businessmen, dignitaries, or even tourists. "But it's not like I've got anything holding me here, either." He's Paris-bound.

With the exception of the Israeli Embassy, most Moscow embassies so far do not report a marked rise in the number of applications for immigrant visas. But the many emigration and work-abroad agencies in Moscow say their client loads have grown by anywhere from 30 percent to 200 percent. Most of these customers have little chance of getting employment abroad, according to Mikhail Alekseyev, manager of one placement agency. But about a third—young, experienced professionals who speak English—will be warmly received by countries like Canada and Australia. And most of the applicants in this group, says Alekseyev, intend to leave permanently. There, on long-term work visas, goes Russia's future.

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A bailout Washington supports.

RISKY BUSINESS

By Roger Lowenstein

On September 23, the Senate passed a bill that makes it harder for Americans to file for bankruptcy protection. The premise of the bill was that personal bankruptcy had gotten too easy, encouraging people to run up excessive credit card bills. "The free ride is over," Senator Charles E. Grassley, an Iowa Republican, pronounced to *The New York Times*.

The Federal Reserve Bank of New York, meanwhile, was sending a rather different signal, through the bailout of Long-Term Capital Management, a hedge fund for the super-rich. The fund had borrowed vast amounts of money to invest in high-risk financial instruments; when that strategy didn't pan out, the fund's losses mounted to the point where the Fed began to fear broader financial collapse. So, the government orchestrated a deal under which private firms anted up $3.65 billion for the fund to meet its obligations. The fund's well-heeled principals saw their equity greatly reduced but still retained a sliver of capital and a hope of recouping their losses. I am told that one partner, Eric Rosenfeld, has a 10,000-bottle wine cellar; now, at least, he may drown his sorrows at leisure.

It is natural to blame the borrower for such a fiasco, but the lenders are equally at fault. Alan Greenspan recently testified that "hedge funds are very strongly regulated by those who lend them money." In fact, Long-Term Capital's brokerage and bank creditors failed to regulate at all. Perhaps bamboozled by the Nobel Prize credentials of Long-Term Capital economists Robert Merton and Myron S. Scholes, they happily supplied credit without even ascertaining the firm's total debt.

The government's role is also troubling. Greenspan himself opposed requiring banks and others to disclose more about their trading in derivatives, which Long-Term Capital borrowed so heavily to buy. More broadly, the proper place for a government-led bailout is at the level of a regulated (and socially useful) institution, such as a bank. Hedge funds are unregulated precisely because their clientele consists of rich investors who, in theory at least, can handle losses. True, the bailout doesn't come out of taxpayer money; still, the government's rush to save this institution was extraordinary. The fact that officials of Merrill Lynch, which took the lead in the bailout, had put $22 million of their personal money in Long-Term Capital enhances the impression of Washington and Wall Street insiders saving their own.

It is possible, of course, that the collapse of one improvident hedge fund could have brought down the financial system; we'll never know. It is also possible that U.S. economic officials identify too closely with Wall Street, perhaps confusing the nation's health with that of investors. Greenspan is the first Fed chairman in memory to fashion monetary policy in response to stock market fluctuations; Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin has been famously obsessed with bond prices. Perhaps Long-Term Capital really is more vital to the nation than the 1.3 million Americans who filed for personal bankruptcy last year. Then again, maybe too many people in Washington watch too much CNBC.

Indeed, the spectacle of Fed officials and Wall Street's elite meeting in the bank's stone fortress recalls a bygone age when government stood in awe of private capital. At least, back then, private capital had a sense of responsibility. But Long-Term Capital was no J.P. Morgan; led by John Meriwether, former Liar's Poker champion at Salomon Brothers, the firm was arrogant in the extreme. Its forte was speculative bets in bonds, usually relative bets such as "Italian government bonds will rise more than U.S. Treasuries will." Its computers knew how such market pairs had behaved in the past, but it was the humans at Long-Term Capital who decided that history would be an infallible guide to the future. People thought similarly in 1929.

Long-Term Capital's computers succeeded for a while because they were mechanically adept at identifying unusual pricing patterns. But they weren't more adept than anyone else's computers—and that, combined with the fatal hubris of its partners, is why Long-Term Capital tanked. In 1995, its first full year of operation, the fund achieved a phenomenal return (after fees) of 43 percent. In 1996, it earned 41 percent. Last year, its profit plunged to 17 percent, well below the stock market averages.

This was hardly a case of bad luck. When someone earns outsized returns, news gets around. Before long, the field is crowded with others playing the same game. "Managers talk to each other. When one sees an opportunity, they all jump in," notes one Chicago-based portfolio manager whose firm allocates money to hedge funds. "It's the herd instinct." Soon, opportunities diminish or come only at a premium.

Long-Term Capital knew all too well that bond arbitrage had gotten crowded. That is why it returned $2.7 billion of its investors' capital at the end of last year. But, rather than scale back its investments, it expanded them—with borrowed money. Convinced it couldn't lose, the fund borrowed and put at risk an astonishing 60 times its $2.3 billion in equity. In short, the firm consciously tried to duplicate its past high returns by playing roulette. This would not seem to be the sort of behavior that public authorities or eminent private institutions would want to encourage, but the Fed-orchestrated rescue does just that.

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CAMPAIGN '98

DEAD MAN WALKING

By Jonathan Chait

It seems like a natural audience for a Democratic candidate. A few hundred retired union workers are sitting on folding chairs in a large hall that resembles a cafeteria at a run-down school—right down to the off-white walls lined with tan cement columns. Outside, several letters have fallen off the billboard so that it reads, "UNITED OOD & COMMERCIA WORKERS UFW LOCAL NO. 876 AFL-CIO." A lawn sign beside the driveway declares, "NO *NEWS* OR *FREE PRESS* WANTED HERE!"—a message of solidarity with the infamous three-year-old newspaper strike that met a miserable defeat.

The UFCW retirees have come here to listen to Geoffrey Fieger, the Democratic candidate for governor, who is not so much speaking to them as shouting at them in the kind of urgent, blurting manner you might use to tell someone he's suddenly caught fire: "They want to cut every benefit you have!" And: "There is a war going on!" It's not particularly effective; the retirees are just staring at him impassively. So Fieger must finally resort to another strategy: begging. "Come on, folks," he pleads. Finally, there are a few sympathetic claps.

Here is the state of the Democratic Party in Michigan. Its gubernatorial candidate is Fieger, Jack Kevorkian's bombastic mouthpiece, who is best known for ridiculing religious leaders and calling his opponent, Governor John Engler, "the result of miscegenation between humans and barnyard animals." Fieger is currently at about 20 percent in the polls—abysmal for any major party candidate, let alone one running against an unloved Republican in a state with a proud liberal heritage. Yet a debacle like Fieger's candidacy is, alas, nothing new for Michigan Democrats. It is merely the latest evidence of the state party's long slide into political decrepitude.

In addition to being loud, Fieger is tall, and his thin face seems to be perpetually red with anger. Before Kevorkian, his chief claim to fame was his reputation as a flamboyant personal-injury lawyer—and it is immediately clear to anybody who meets him why he made millions at it. A good personal-injury lawyer must convey to clients and juries the scurrilousness of his foes. Fieger, who holds a degree in theater, has an almost preternatural ability to maintain himself in a constant state of outrage. His essential technique is to dehumanize his adversaries. At a press conference for Kevorkian, Fieger once displayed a photograph of an opposing lawyer's face with a clown nose pinned on it. He has called Engler "dumber than Dan Quayle and twice as ugly," and he once suggested that Engler's babies might have corkscrew tails.

Fieger has conducted his campaign as if he were waging a class-action lawsuit on behalf of the entire population. He accuses Engler of racism, poor economic management, neglect of social spending, and, as redress, many other evil things. He promises the protection of every existing job, plus more spending on infrastructure, the environment, and education—and huge tax cuts, too.

It's a breathtaking series of promises, and they make sense only if you grasp Fieger's core political belief: Governor Engler is massively looting the state budget. Fieger clings to this notion with the feverish certainty of a conspiracy theorist. But, while most other conspiracy buffs immerse themselves in endless minutiae—the make of Oswald's gun, the weather conditions at Roswell—Fieger lacks even rudimentary facts. In a meeting with the *Detroit News* editorial board, he explained: "The money is there.... The federal government says we have thirty-five billion dollars. Mr. Engler's budget shows revenues of 21.5 billion dollars. That's a difference of 14.5 billion dollars. Maybe it's going out the back door."

Fieger's facts are almost right. The state spends $31 billion and takes in only $23 billion in revenue. But there is an innocent, none-too-secret explanation for the $8 billion gap—that's the amount of money the federal government contributes to the state budget. And, even if that were not the case, the $8 billion discrepancy would prove the opposite of what Fieger intends; it is usually an indication of embezzlement if the state is spending *less* than it brings in, not *more*. Yet Fieger revels in his ignorance. When the *News* asked him how much revenue the state income tax brought in, he answered, "I have no idea." He then put a transcript of the interview on his campaign website.

But Fieger's nonwonkishness has not hurt him because it has been entirely subsumed by a metaphysical debate over whether he is a religious bigot. The debate, unfortunately for Fieger, is not breaking his way. Republicans have taken to calling Fieger "the Democrats' David Duke," and in their commercials they repeat his familiar attacks on religious leaders. Fieger has, on various occasions, called Jesus "some goofball that got nailed to the cross," said a group of Orthodox rabbis was "closer to Nazis than they think," and called a Catholic archbishop a "nut." In fairness, the Jesus line is an out-of-context quote of a sentiment that Fieger did not endorse. More generally, in the Fieger lexicon, these are insults so mild that they could almost be considered compliments. If he is treating religious leaders any differently, it is with uncharacteristic reverence.

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How, you may ask, did such a man become the Democratic nominee for governor? The answer begins with the Michigan Democratic Party and the fact that it remains a kind of political time capsule, a remnant of the party preserved intact as it existed 20 years ago. In the last decade, the national party has decided that its candidates cannot simply reflect the views of its composite interest groups but must also appeal to centrist, independent voters. Yet Michigan Democrats have moved in the opposite direction—because, very simply, the United Auto Workers wants it that way.

Since Walter Reuther's day, the party in Michigan—one of the nation's most unionized states—has never made an important decision without the UAW's consent; labor historically reciprocated by exercising its power with a restraint born of enlightened self-interest. A candidate who appealed only to unions could not muster enough votes to carry a general election, so, in 1982, for example, the UAW asked James Blanchard, a moderate suburban congressman, to run for governor. Blanchard won, and he served eight years.

Around the time that Blanchard lost—to Engler, in a narrow upset—the calculus began to change. The UAW decided it cared more about its control of the party than about the party's winning elections. "The old union leadership was careful to distinguish between being a union member and being a Democrat," says a Michigan Democrat friendly to the UAW. "This union leadership wants to be the Democratic Party." For instance, two years ago, a regional director of the UAW sent all Democratic officeholders in the state a letter asking them to back every UAW-endorsed primary candidate. The letter arrived before the UAW had even made its endorsements. One Democrat refused to sign.

Meanwhile, the UAW's influence over the rank and file diminished. In the 1992 presidential primary, the UAW put its muscle behind Tom Harkin and then Jerry Brown; Clinton won easily. This year, before the gubernatorial primary, the president of the UAW tapped his close friend, Larry Owen, a former Lansing mayor. And, while Owen, who is widely considered an ineffective campaigner, generated little enthusiasm among Michigan Democrats, none dared challenge the UAW's selection. This opened the door for Fieger. By constantly attacking Engler as a racist, Fieger appealed to blacks, who voted in unusually high numbers due to a widely publicized referendum on casino gambling in Detroit. Fieger also took a large chunk of the union rank-and-file vote and narrowly won the primary.

Things have gotten rockier since then, as the religion issue has taken its toll. Fieger, naturally, attributes his difficulty to a vast plot. "There is a power structure with billions of dollars going on," he tells a group of Detroit clergymen. The power structure is terrified because "you could have, for the first time, a governor who came from the people." And they will stop at nothing: "I'm a little worried about [Engler] shooting me."

Later, at the offices of Fieger, Fieger & Schwartz (the first Fieger is Geoffrey's father), he recounts how great men of history must inevitably endure the slings and arrows of the elite. As Fieger's assorted minions scurry through the elegant, marble-floored lobby past walls lined with paintings and photographs of himself, he seems to have lost none of his sense of grievance. "The only other parallel," he bellows, "is to read descriptions of Martin Luther King." Later, Fieger reconsiders and evokes a different parallel: like Jesus, he is "a threat to the status quo." No, wait, Jesus was a martyr—"I'm not a martyr, I'm gonna win"—so maybe Galileo would be more apt. ("Didn't they condemn Galileo?") Finally, he settles on Michael Jordan. "If Jordan could hit the curveball, Major League Baseball would have been pissed as hell," he declares.

They are angry with Fieger because he is a great lawyer who then became a great politician. "They've been hostile to me because of who I am," barks Fieger. "They've been hostile since day one. Now they're, like, sixty times more hostile." And then he lets out an uproarious, maniacal laugh. •

CAMPAIGN '98

CHICAGO HOPELESS

By Steve Chapman

If Illinois Democrats could have chosen this year's Republican nominee for the U.S. Senate, they would have chosen someone very much like Peter Fitzgerald: an unknown male state legislator with a record of doctrinaire conservatism, a starchy demeanor, a silver-spoon background, and few friends in the state Republican hierarchy. After all, one of the iron laws of Illinois politics is that right-wingers don't win races for senator or governor. Yet Fitzgerald holds a ten-point lead in the latest *Chicago Tribune* poll, and it's not because Illinoisans are particularly angry at President Clinton (surveys show they want him to stay in office) or because Senator Carol Moseley-Braun has put herself on the wrong side of policy issues. No, it's because, here in Illinois, the number one handicap plaguing the Democratic Party is not the issue of Bill Clinton's character but the issue of Moseley-Braun's. And those questions are serious enough that the gap in the polls might persist all the way up to Election Day—something Democrats can ill-afford with an impeachment trial of the president looming as a real possibility.

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To be sure, Moseley-Braun's troubles should hardly be a shock. In 1992, when Moseley-Braun surprised incumbent Alan Dixon and won the Democratic primary, her personable style and luminous smile catapulted her to national prominence. Not only was it the Year of the Woman, but Moseley-Braun was about to become the Senate's first black female member. But, even then, it was clear that Moseley-Braun was more lucky than good. During the general election campaign, her knowledge and understanding of national issues hardly impressed. She also had some explaining to do when it was revealed that a $28,000 financial windfall to her mother, a Medicaid recipient, ended up in the pockets of Moseley-Braun and her siblings; after an investigation, Moseley-Braun had to reimburse the state $15,000. And, despite facing an underfunded sacrificial Republican who had volunteered for the suicidal duty of opposing the supposedly invincible Dixon, Moseley-Braun got just 53 percent of the vote in a Democratic year. An Election Day exit poll found that 56 percent of the voters doubted her honesty.

If that was a wake-up call, she slept through it. Shortly after the election, she jetted off to Africa for a 26-day vacation, accompanied by her campaign manager and fiancé, Kgosie Matthews. On her return, she bristled at questions, refusing to say where she had gone or who had paid for the trip. Later, she was investigated by the Federal Election Commission and the Internal Revenue Service for allegedly using campaign funds to pay for clothing and personal travel, including a trip to Hawaii. In the end, she escaped punishment but fell short of clearing her name. The IRS twice recommended that the Justice Department impanel a grand jury to hear evidence against Moseley-Braun, only to be overruled. The FEC dropped the matter, citing cost considerations and the impending expiration of the statute of limitations. But a spokesperson said publicly that the agency was providing "no exoneration, no *Good Housekeeping* seal of approval, just no action." That didn't stop Moseley-Braun from claiming vindication while calling herself, with unintended irony, "the most investigated United States senator in history."

Moseley-Braun's trips have also provoked criticism from TransAfrica President Randall Robinson and Representative Jesse Jackson Jr., as well as protests by Nigerian pro-democracy activists, because of her frequent stops in Nigeria, where she met with the late dictator General Sani Abacha. The senator has countered that she went to Nigeria on vacations and met with the general only because of a long friendship with his late son. She's also made the not unreasonable argument that, if trade and engagement are the way to promote human rights in China, such a policy should work equally well for Nigeria. But critics noted that Matthews (who is no longer her fiancé or her campaign manager) worked as a lobbyist for the Nigerian government, and her secretiveness about the trips fed suspicions.

Moseley-Braun's most recent misstep occurred in September, after George Will wrote a column criticizing her on these and other grounds. In front of TV cameras, she fulminated out loud: "I think because he could not say 'nigger,' he said the word 'corrupt,'" though Will had used neither word. "George Will can just take his hood and go back to wherever he came from." Within hours, she was forced to retract her words, and the next day she faxed Will an apology. But the damage was done. Moseley-Braun had not only stepped into another mess of her own making but had gratuitously raised the subject of race. As one Democratic operative says, the episode dramatized her two worst traits: "She conveys a sense of both entitlement and paranoia."

Some would argue that her penchant for controversy has unjustly eclipsed her record in Washington. And, while no one would characterize her as an influential senator, it's true she has had some small-scale successes. She was one of 50 members who voted for President Clinton's 1993 budget plan, allowing Al Gore to cast the tie-breaking vote. She killed a tax that would have hurt Chicago's commodity exchanges, she pushed through some reforms to fatten women's pensions, and she persuaded Major League Baseball to start paying pensions to aging Negro League players. Still, it's hard to be proud of a senator who finished third in the "no rocket scientist" category in a survey of Hill staffers conducted by *Washingtonian* magazine.

Nevertheless, at one point, it looked like Moseley-Braun's famous luck would hold this year. She was spared a formidable challenger when the popular two-term incumbent Republican governor, Jim Edgar, retired from politics. The state GOP found a solid-looking substitute in Comptroller Loleta Didrickson, a moderate, whose sex would make it easier for women to abandon their onetime symbol. But Didrickson's inept, underfunded campaign was no match for the $7 million Fitzgerald spent. That set up what Democrats had hoped for all along: a replay of the 1996 Senate race, when Democrat Richard Durbin coasted to victory over Al Salvi, whose opposition to abortion and gun control proved a fatal liability.

Moseley-Braun wasted no time in branding Fitzgerald a right-wing extremist, and, in a normal year, the charge might stick. He favors a ban on abortion with no exceptions for rape or incest, supported a "conceal carry" bill allowing licensees to carry a handgun, favors a constitutional amendment to ban flag desecration, and has never seen a tax increase he liked. During the primary campaign, his sole gesture to neutralize the gun issue was to say, with a pronounced lack of enthusiasm, that he "would not vote to repeal" the Brady Act or the federal ban on so-called assault weapons. The scion of a wealthy suburban banking family who majored in ancient Latin and Greek at Dartmouth, Fitzgerald is James Carville's image of a typical Republican.

But, since Carville is not running Moseley-Braun's campaign, Fitzgerald has been able to get away with bland bromides trumpeting his determination to "fight

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for families" and his loathing of tax increases. Echoing a favorite theme of Republicans nationwide this year, he ties the two issues together by arguing that high taxes force parents to work two or three jobs rather than devote time to their children—an unacknowledged 180-degree turnabout from the position of Ronald Reagan, who insisted that onerous marginal rates discourage honest labor by making it less remunerative.

But issues have been notably inconspicuous. "I've never seen an Illinois Senate campaign this quiet," marvels Andy Foster, an aide to Governor Edgar who managed his 1994 campaign. Moseley-Braun, strapped for cash, has only recently begun airing ads attacking Fitzgerald's record. Nor have her allies taken up much of the slack; so far, the only interest-group interventions have been an endorsement of Moseley-Braun by Jim and Sarah Brady and a $250,000 purchase of air time by the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee to run a spot attacking Fitzgerald's stance on gun control.

Since the primary, Fitzgerald has done his best to move to the middle. One spot claims he has a "centrist position" on gun control, citing his support for the Brady Act and the assault-weapons ban. Another praises him for "voting for a minimum forty-eight-hour hospital stay for moms giving birth. Sponsoring a law to protect women who are the victims of abuse. Backing a patient bill of rights so quality medical care isn't sacrificed for HMO profits." The first two issues, of course, are hardly controversial. On managed-care controls, consumer advocates complain that, in the state Senate, Fitzgerald voted not for the bill they wanted but for a weaker alternative. The abortion issue has yet to surface—and may not, since Fitzgerald can respond to attacks by noting that he shares his position with the Democratic gubernatorial nominee and by criticizing Moseley-Braun's votes against a federal ban on "partial birth" abortions (which are already banned in Illinois). The wealthy challenger plans to spend a whopping $4.5 million on TV time. That's enough to ensure that the average viewer will see his spots a dozen times every week from now until Election Day.

Six years ago, Moseley-Braun aroused such enthusiasm that you could see people on the street in T-shirts bearing her visage and a pithy slogan: "Make history." The enthusiasm has long since dissipated. So Moseley-Braun's likely plan for the last weeks is a fierce negative barrage portraying Fitzgerald as a slickly packaged right-winger masquerading as a moderate. Given the current disgust with politicians, it's a risky approach that could easily damage the incumbent. It also requires her to get voters interested in policy issues rather than character issues—something few political candidates have managed to do this year. But, for better or worse, it's the only option she has. "Right now, it's very much a referendum on her," says Foster. And that's a vote Moseley-Braun would almost certainly lose.

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Matt Fong and the new Asian American voter.

MINORITY LEADER

By Gregory Rodriguez

Although voter turnout among Asian Americans reached an all-time high in the last election, it has been widely assumed that this year would mark a retrenchment. Nineteen ninety-six, after all, was the year of the Clinton fund-raising scandal—the year that the Democratic National Committee started calling its Asian American contributors to check their Social Security numbers and make sure they were citizens; the year the Federal Bureau of Investigation started running background checks on donors suspected of funneling illegal foreign contributions into DNC coffers. During the campaign, Democratic fundraiser John Huang, the man at the center of the scandal, had promised Asian American donors that the nation's political establishment would take greater notice of them if their contributions exceeded their percentage of the population—a prediction that proved all too prescient as Asian Americans found themselves at the center of a mushrooming controversy over political fund-raising and national security.

Yet here it is, campaign season 1998, and Asian Americans seem more resolutely involved than ever. And perhaps no single person is better proof of this fact than the Republican candidate for Senate, California State

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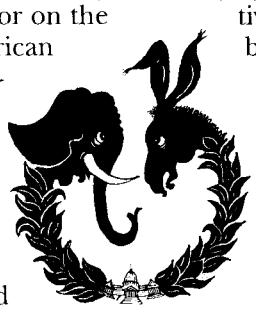
Treasurer Matt Fong. A 44-year-old, straitlaced, fourth-generation Californian who speaks only a few words of Chinese, Fong nevertheless owes his place on the ballot in large part to an outpouring of ethnic financial support that propelled him past his primary rivals. This surge may well carry him all the way to Washington—current polls show him in a dead heat with Democratic incumbent Barbara Boxer—and it seems like a clear indication that the Asian American constituency is in politics to stay.

But, because of their heterogeneity, Asian Americans are not likely to make any ideological difference in American politics, at least not in the way that other powerful ethnic groups have. Their most lasting contribution may be their unique ability to transcend traditional ethnic fault lines; indeed, the political maturation of Asian Americans may signal a new era in racial politics. Matt Fong intends to be part of this transformation—and there's a good chance he'll succeed.

Despite the scandals, the election of 1996 did bring some important symbolic victories for Asian American voters, like the election in Washington state of Gary Locke as the first-ever Asian American governor on the mainland. It also politicized the Asian American electorate in ways not likely to be soon forgotten. Public debates over Republican proposals to curtail immigrant family reunification and deny welfare benefits to legal immigrants spurred both a rush to naturalization and higher voter turnout. Not surprisingly, in 1996, advocacy groups registered 75,000 new Asian voters nationwide. Between 1992 and 1996, the Asian portion of the California electorate doubled from an estimated three percent to six percent of the total.



And, while the scandals clearly turned some Asian Americans away from politics, they caused others to redouble their efforts. "In the face of a challenge, some get frustrated, others get motivated," says Wen Chang, mayor pro tem of the small Los Angeles suburb of Diamond Bar. Chang can speak to this with some authority: he was the man behind one of five fund-raising events Fong's Asian American supporters held in August, yet he's also seen the role that money from Asian American supporters played in Fong's June primary victory. By Election Day, Asian American donors had contributed an astonishing one-half of Fong's $3 million war chest. Not since former two-term California Governor George Deukmejian, an Armenian-American, ran for office in 1982 had a statewide candidate's financing been so heavily dependent on an ethnic base. Fong's opponent still outspent him by four to one, but the extra money from Asian Americans was what allowed Fong to eke out a victory.

To be sure, Asian Americans lack the traditional prerequisites for building a minority power base: heavy demographic concentrations, relative homogeneity, and a culture of political organizing. But their political advantages are considerable nevertheless. In 1993, Asian American families had a higher median income than white families. In California, home to nearly 40 percent of the nation's Asian population, Asians are considerably more likely than whites to have a college degree. According to James P. Smith, a senior economist at the RAND Corporation in Santa Monica, California, Asian immigrants outperform whites in education and income within one generation. In short, their political advantage is money. Professor Alan Heslop of Claremont McKenna College is one of the few who predicts this advantage will translate into power. "The same thing is going to happen to Asians as Jews," he says. "They will have more representation than their population would indicate."

That day may come soon. Large-scale Asian immigration, starting in the 1970s, has transformed what had been a small, mostly U.S.-born, and overwhelmingly Japanese- and Chinese-American population into a large, highly diverse, and overwhelmingly foreign-born population. Chinese and Filipinos now make up the two largest Asian groups, followed by Japanese, Indians, Koreans, and Vietnamese. Their population—which nearly quadrupled between 1970 and 1990—is relatively new to the country, but it's likely to become more civic-minded as years and generations pass. A 1996 study out of UCLA revealed that, among Asian immigrants who remain in the United States for 20 or more years, 81 percent become naturalized. And, once registered, Asian Americans have the highest voting rate of any group.

What's fascinating about the rise of Asian American voters, however, is that generally they have not played a pivotal role in the rise of Asian American politicians—at least not until now. Perhaps because they are the most geographically dispersed and residentially integrated racial minority group, whites often perceive them as less different from whites than, say, African Americans or Latinos. So it's not surprising that California's two Asian American congressmen, Democrat Robert Matsui, who is Japanese-American, and Republican Jay Kim, who was born in Korea, both represent predominantly white districts. Democrat Gary Locke's home state of Washington was only four percent Asian in 1990. Matt Fong's mother, March Fong Eu, a Democrat who served as California secretary of state for 20 years, was first elected when Asians were a negligible share of the state electorate. From 1977 to 1983, S.I. Hayakawa, a Japanese-American, represented California in the U.S. Senate.

Yet, at the same time, Asian Americans can still call upon their own experiences as a minority to make credible appeals to other ethnic groups. In California, for example, there is some evidence that even Latino voters have supported Asian candidates. In 1996, State Assemblyman Mike Honda, whose San Jose district has more than twice as many Latino as Asian voters, used the old United Farm Worker rallying cry "*Si se puede!*" as his campaign slogan. That same year, in East Los Angeles, Municipal Court Judge Ruth A. Kwan, who is Chinese-American, retained her appointed seat in a race against

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The New York Review of Books

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a Latino challenger in an overwhelmingly Latino district. Indeed, Asian American politicians can get away with playing both sides of the race card—which, as it happens, is precisely what Matt Fong is doing.

"We're the neutral minority, so to speak," Fong says. "Asian Americans are having higher incomes and are mixing more among groups of similar income levels." At the same time, he says, Asian American candidates have more in common with nonwhite constituencies than do white candidates. "I can walk into a minority neighborhood and have a common experience of being told, 'You can't work here or live here.' My family has felt that. I can relate. On the other hand, being a lawyer and an Air Force officer, I can walk into any establishment organization and feel quite comfortable there as well." Former Los Angeles City Councilman Mike Woo, who lost his bid for mayor in 1993, agrees that Asian American candidates can sometimes benefit from a "positive stereotype" of being hard-working and high-achieving. "Maybe non-Asian voters tend to see Asians as having a less ethnically defined agenda than other nonwhites," he adds.

For Republicans, Fong is a godsend. Virtually inoculated against charges of extremism, he can speak out against liberal orthodoxy on race without getting tagged as a racist. In 1992, Democratic Senator Barbara Boxer narrowly defeated conservative commentator Bruce Herschensohn in part by characterizing him as a right-winger—a label she can't pin on Fong, for, not only is Fong a moderate, he is Asian. "He's a 'person of color,'" jokes Ken Khachigian, a prominent Republican strategist who ran the Herschensohn campaign in 1992. "It will take the venom out of the attacks by Democrats. [Boxer] can't paint him as someone out of the mainstream."

And Fong knows how to use this to his advantage. While the California Republican Party has been lying low on racially charged issues ever since the growing Latino electorate punished it at the polls in 1996, Fong has actually stepped up his rhetoric. "I dare her to call me a racist," he told the *Los Angeles Times* a year ago as he defended his support for the successful 1996 ballot initiative that banned state-sponsored affirmative action programs.

The state GOP leadership has high hopes that the election of an Asian American Republican will help change the party's image. "We're trying to broaden our base, especially with Hispanics and Asians, and on the statewide ticket we have Fong and [Ruben] Barrales," says Republican State Senator Richard K. Rainey. Barrales is the Mexican-American Republican nominee for state controller. "We need to get out the message that we're not just the party of the WASP." Nationally, Fong's campaign has become something of a mini cause célèbre. Republican notables like U.S. Senator John McCain of Arizona, House Speaker Newt Gingrich, former Secretary of State George Shultz, and New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani have hosted or plan to host fund-raisers for Fong. In July, Jack Kemp, the GOP's 1996 vice presidential nominee, who long has advocated a more inclusive party, hailed Fong as a "twenty-first-century Republican."

But Fong is not always the man these supporters make him out to be—or, at least, believe him to be—for, when he is addressing Asian American supporters, frequently in the context of fund-raising, he invokes an appeal that is implicitly, and at times explicitly, based on race and ethnicity. "How American do you have to be to be considered American?" he asked one fund-raising audience, referring to the bias many believed lurked behind the fund-raising scandal. "Do I have to wear a blond wig to be considered American?" Fong exploits Asian ethnic sensitivities as well as any ethnic Democratic politician does. The only difference is that he steps back and points to his primary victory as a sign of America's fundamental racial fairness. "Obviously, the Chinese- and Asian American vote was not enough to win," he tells his audience, referring to his non-Asian support. "I won here in America."

True enough. But, of course, it was likely Fong's ethnic appeal that pushed him over the top in a very close race. This year, California held its first open primary in which voters could cross party lines, and Fong was perhaps the principal beneficiary of the new rules. "There's evidence of Asian American crossover voting for Fong and not just among the Chinese," says David Lee, executive director of the Chinese American Voter Education Committee. With more than five million ballots cast, Fong won by a margin of 132,000 votes. According to an exit poll conducted by VISION 21, a nonpartisan Chinese-American political organization, 83.7 percent of Chinese-American voters in Los Angeles County cast ballots for Fong, including two-thirds of Chinese-American Democrats.

To be sure, Fong is just one man—his fortunes will hardly determine how the Asian American vote coalesces ideologically, if indeed it coalesces at all. Yet Fong's prominence has at least convinced both major parties that the Asian American vote is worth cultivating. At this early stage, each victory by an Asian candidate is hugely significant and capable of galvanizing Asian Americans to participate even more actively in the next election cycle. Fong's chances of winning this November are better than anyone could have predicted a year ago. After the fund-raising fiasco, which had the potential to alienate new Americans, a high-profile Asian candidacy is attracting many immigrants to the political process. Kent Lee, a Taiwanese-born registered Democrat, and his wife, Carol, a legal resident alien, turned out for a Fong fund-raiser because they wanted to stand up for the rights of Asian Americans. They were two of the few guests that night who attempted to sing "The Star-Spangled Banner" in all its tortured musical phrasing. Holding a yellow flyer with the lyrics on it, they swayed back and forth in unison with the tape-recorded rendition. "It was only the third time I've sung it," says Kent. The other two times were at San Diego Padres games. "It's not easy to sing. But you feel like you're part of the country." •

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Nostalgia and the Christian right.

BATTLE FOR THE 'BURBS

By Peter Beinart

"Frantic orthodoxy is never rooted in faith but in doubt. It is when we are not sure that we are doubly sure. Fundamentalism is, therefore, inevitable in an age which has destroyed so many certainties by which faith once expressed itself and upon which it relied."

—Reinhold Niebuhr

On Sunday, August 16, the city of Olathe, Kansas, demolished its oldest grain elevator. A crowd watched as dynamite tore through the edifice, reducing it to rubble. The *Olathe Daily News* reported that the city was considering building a parking lot on the property to help relieve traffic congestion.

The elevator had stood barren for years, and its destruction left the city with one remaining silo, also unused. But, for most of this century, grain elevators dotted Olathe's landscape. Farmers journeyed from surrounding districts to deposit corn in the vast structures, where it would sit until loaded onto railroad cars for transport to Kansas City, St. Louis, or Wichita to fatten livestock destined for slaughter.

For close to 100 years, Olathe lived off silos and off two gifts from the Kansas legislature. In 1859, following a fierce struggle, the legislature named Olathe the seat of Johnson County, which meant a county courthouse and the jobs that came with it. A few years later, after another nasty fight, Olathe landed the state school for the deaf, which provided yet more jobs. The courthouse marked the center of town, and Olathe's other businesses, which included a general store that catered to visiting farmers, radiated out for several blocks. Beyond the businesses were houses. And beyond the houses, for miles in every direction, were farms.

When the United States declared victory in World War II, Olathe still housed no more than 5,000 people. As late as the 1950s, the town butcher doubled as mayor. But, in the 1960s and 1970s, Olathe began to feel the centralizing pull of America's ever-expanding highway system. Newly built Interstate 435 looped around Kansas City, Missouri, drawing Olathe, and dozens of other formerly independent towns, into the city's orbit. And Interstate 35 sliced south across the Plains, linking Olathe to every major city between Minneapolis and Dallas.

With the highways came migrations. I-435 and I-35 cut travel time between Olathe and Kansas City from half a day to half an hour—and offered middle-class residents of Kansas City an escape route from crumbling schools, mounting taxes, and worsening crime. Simultaneously, the relentless trend in American agriculture toward the replacement of human hands by machines forced more and more Kansans off their parents' farms. And so a reverse exodus brought young men and women toward a Kansas City metropolitan area that was expanding outward to meet them.

It was in places like Olathe where these migrations met, and they have transformed it almost beyond recognition. The city is seven times bigger than it was in 1960. To many Kansas City telephone operators, Olathe remains an unfamiliar word, but it is now the fifth-largest city in Kansas. The farmland surrounding the town has given way to housing subdivisions, and the few remaining farm stalls sit in the shadow of shopping centers. Even the town's name has changed. Old-timers call it *Olathee*, but they have been swamped by newcomers who call it *Olatha*.

Something else has changed, too. Olathe has become the center of a revolution in Kansas politics, a revolution with echoes across the country. A decade ago, the Christian right barely existed in the state. The Kansas Republican Party was dominated, as it had been for generations, by frugal, tough-minded pragmatists in the mold of Bob Dole and Nancy Kassebaum Baker. Olathe itself was represented in the U.S. House by a pro-choice Republican moderate.

In 1992, the Christian right struck its first blow, taking over the Republican Party in Johnson County. In 1994, it won control of the party apparatus statewide and replaced the centrist Republican speaker of the Kansas House of Representatives with a Christian conservative. In 1996, Christian conservatives powered Congressman Sam Brownback to an upset victory over moderate Sheila Frahm in the Republican primary for Bob Dole's Senate seat. This year, David Miller, the head of the Kansas GOP and a former political action director of Kansans for Life, unsuccessfully challenged the state's popular sitting governor in the Republican primary. Six years ago, the Christian Coalition gave the Kansas congressional delegation an average rating of 60. This year, that average is 97.

Olathe, in the words of Kansas Republican National Committeeman Dwight Sutherland, is "the birthplace of

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the revolution, the truly holy city." Its congressman is a former instructor at an evangelical college. Its mayor sings in a Christian rock band. The local Fellowship of Christian Cowboys hosts a rodeo Bible camp. The Christian Book and Gift Shoppe is the size of a small supermarket, and it peddles everything from Christian exercise videos to Christian ties to Christian crossword puzzles to "scripture cookies" (a Christian equivalent of fortune cookies). Local teenagers sport bracelets bearing the initials WWJD? (What Would Jesus Do?), and the Christian Book and Gift Shoppe claims to sell 1,000 per month. Johnson County has won the national home-school basketball tournament for five of the last seven years.

The media tend to cast Christian conservatives as elderly, poor, relatively uneducated, and rural, but the residents of Olathe are none of those things. In fact, more than 50 percent of them have bachelor's degrees, close to 90 percent of city families earn more than $30,000 a year, and the city's median age is eight years younger than the national average. And Olathe is not anomalous. Contrary to public perception, recent surveys show that Christian conservatives are about as well-off and well-educated as Americans as a whole and more likely to have young children.

Most important, the Christian right is not a rural movement; it is a suburban one. The first generation of academics to study Christian conservatives assumed that they lived as far as possible from the threatening forces of modernity. And, indeed, white evangelical Christians are disproportionately likely to live in rural areas and small towns. But *conservative, politicized* evangelicals—the people we call the Christian right and the constituency that the Republican Party is mobilizing to win this fall's election—live overwhelmingly in suburbs. And understanding their relationship to the suburbs in which they live is the key to understanding a city like Olathe and the movement it embodies.

The forces that turned Olathe from a small farming town into an 80,000-person suburb are present across the country. A glimpse at recent census reports shows that American population growth is occurring in very specific places. First, it is occurring outside of the industrial Northeast and Midwest—generally in the South, the agricultural Midwest, and the far West. Second, growth is occurring at the edge of cities. Central cities are mostly stagnant or losing population. Older, closer-in suburbs are growing very slowly. Rural populations are also stagnant or declining. But outer-ring suburbs—where the city meets the countryside—are growing very fast.

In other words, metropolitan areas are gobbling up large chunks of rural territory around them. And they are doing so in the most culturally conservative regions of the nation. The fastest-growing counties in America are on the fringe of cities like Atlanta, Sioux Falls, Denver, Dallas, Las Vegas, Phoenix, Fort Lauderdale, and Kansas City. And they are exactly where you find the strongest support for the Christian right.

Metropolitan growth did not, of course, create evangelical Christianity. Throughout this century, tens of millions of born-again American Protestants have read the Bible literally and held conservative opinions about everything from drinking to dancing to evolution. But for 50 years, roughly from the Scopes trial until the election of Ronald Reagan, it was an article of evangelical faith to remain separate from the political process. The theology of pre-millennialism told evangelicals that they could not bring Christ's return by perfecting human society; in fact, moral decline was inevitable. The role of the evangelical was to save as many souls as possible and thus spare them from the terrible tribulations that would accompany the Second Coming. In the '50s, Jerry Falwell himself declared that he was "a soul-winner and a separatist."

Part of the reason evangelicals abandoned separatism was the liberalization of the culture. Most white evangelicals were, for instance, disturbed by the legalization of abortion and the public acceptance of homosexuality. In response, leaders like Falwell adapted pre-millennialism to make room for political activism—arguing that, unless Christians changed the government's course, it might eventually outlaw proselytizing altogether, which would make it impossible to save souls before Christ's return.

But cultural liberalization alone does not fully explain the switch. Had evangelicals remained an overwhelmingly rural population, they would still have noticed growing societal permissiveness, but its impact would have been much more distant. In fact, research by Professors James Guth of Furman University and John Green of the University of Akron suggests that, even today, Christian-right activism among rural evangelicals is low. The reason the cultural changes of the past 30 years jolted evangelicals from their political quiescence was that, for many of them, the changes were not far at all; they were near. And they were near because evangelical Protestants have been steadily migrating from rural areas into the expanding suburbs of the Bible Belt, into places like Olathe, Kansas.

Linda Highland is a pretty, middle-age woman with dark, wavy hair and glasses. She grew up in Marshall County in northeast Kansas, where her family farmed wheat, corn, soybeans, and alfalfa hay. She remembers going without running water as a child; she remembers gathering corncobs to feed the fire in the kitchen; she remembers her one-room school, where she was often the only person in her grade. And she remembers saying grace with her father as he tucked her into bed. Linda Highland's family was simultaneously conservative and apolitical. They would likely have taken the Christian right's side on cultural issues, except that, in Marshall County, those issues did not really exist. Asked about her parents' views on sex education and homosexuality, Highland said: "They'd probably be surprised you even asked."

Today, no one in Linda Highland's family still farms. One of her brothers is a dentist in Wichita; another is a miller in Des Moines; a third is an engineer in Marysville, the largest city in Marshall County; and a

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fourth also lives in Marysville, where he works as a banker. Highland herself majored in home economics at Kansas State University, met her husband, and, in 1991, moved to Johnson County, just across the city line from Olathe.

As a child, Highland had been active in 4-H, the government-funded youth extension program, and her children took part in it as well. When she moved to Johnson County, friends suggested she run for a seat on the county's 4-H Program Development Committee, and she did. After winning, she began to review the 4-H curriculum, and she discovered a course on sex education that she felt was too graphic for children. A while later, she received a 4-H pamphlet titled "Families of All Kinds." The pamphlet was designed to teach children about the concept of family, which it defined as "a group of people who love and take care of each other." Highland found the definition disturbingly broad. "I feel strongly that children really want to know their mother and father," she said. "I just didn't really see the need to redefine the family."

Highland had not previously spent much time thinking about why she valued the traditional family and opposed explicit sex education. But the pamphlets forced these semiconscious assumptions to the front of her mind. "My value system was being challenged," she remembers. "I was forced to say, 'What do I believe in?' "

She became even more concerned when an English teacher with a taste for New Age taught her daughter transcendental meditation. Before long, Highland began to volunteer for socially conservative candidates in her neighborhood. And, about the same time, she started to reconnect to her faith. She began attending a weekly Bible study class and moved to a more conservative church.

Central to Highland's religious and political awakening was the realization that her children were living in an environment radically different from the one in which she grew up. She remembers her childhood community as one where "parents ... supported the teachers, and the schools supported the parents." But, in Johnson County, her daughter was returning home with "ideas that did come from the schools and not from us."

Highland was experiencing what sociologists call "structural pluralism." The more modern a society is, the more it tends to distinguish between different spheres of human activity—particularly between spheres defined as private and those defined as public. In 1950s rural Kansas, churches often served as schoolhouses during the week. And, even though Highland went to separate buildings for school, home, and church, the three institutions reinforced one another. In the suburbs of Kansas City, they often do not.

Time and again, Christian conservatives in and around Olathe described the same epiphany: the day they realized that the schools were not teaching with them but against them. Sometimes the epiphany was not about the schools but about some other arm of the government, and occasionally it was even about an overly liberal church—but the epiphany always involved an undermining of the home. And it was often linked to a nostalgic memory of childhood, usually in a small town where those institutions worked together.

The epiphany typically produced two separate reactions. The first was an effort to withdraw from the public realm. Christian schools are booming in Johnson County. And home schooling—the ultimate reconnection of the public and private spheres—is booming even more. In 1986, 17 families formed the Johnson County Parent Educators. Today, the association boasts 750 families, most of whom live in Olathe. The network has grown large enough to support home-school basketball, football, and debate teams—not to mention a full-fledged home-school graduation each year, complete with caps, gowns, and diplomas presented by Mom and Dad.

There are still many Christian conservatives with children in the Olathe public schools, and they often go to great lengths to insulate their children from material that will undermine the values of the home. One local pastor, for instance, informs teachers at the beginning of the school year as to which topics would require his children to leave the room. But, increasingly, Christian-right parents see the public schools as hopeless. An article in the August 7 issue of the *Kansas Christian* warns, "PUBLIC SCHOOLS AETHISTIC [SIC], DESTROY RELIGIOUS FAITH IN 70 PERCENT OF STUDENTS."

But the impulse to withdraw is sooner or later twinned with the realization that full separation is impossible. Christian conservatives around Olathe depict a government that is always encroaching into the spheres of home and church. The government tries to regulate home schooling, it tries to remove tax breaks from religious colleges, and, under the guise of child welfare, it prevents parents from disciplining their children. Liberals are appalled that the Christian right often opposes state-run child-nutrition programs. But, for Christian conservatives, feeding children is the responsibility of the family, and even benign government intrusion strips parents of their authority and makes it harder for them to pass on their values.

The realization that government encroachment is inevitable usually propels Christian conservatives into politics. The men and women with whom I spoke sometimes wistfully imagined that the whole country might change—and become more like the one they remember growing up in. But, usually, their political ambitions were more limited: to halt government interference in the church and the family. Many activists said they had little interest in restoring teacher-led prayer in public school—as long as the government didn't interfere with their children's right to pray or evangelize. That might sound surprising, but it flows naturally from pre-millennialism, which teaches that society's institutions cannot be saved but as many individuals as possible must be.

In remembering their youth, Christian conservatives in Olathe sometimes said that the schools taught values that reinforced the home. But, more frequently, they said that their childhood schools did not teach values at all; they simply taught facts. Often they bemoaned the

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politicization of education today. Speaking of her school in Marshall County, Highland said approvingly, "There was no getting into social issues."

From a certain perspective, of course, schools in small towns in Kansas in the '50s did teach values, if only by omission. None of the people I talked to ever heard anything from their teachers about homosexuality or abortion, for instance, since there was a community consensus that such topics were inappropriate. It was that unspoken consensus that allowed the schools to concentrate on "facts." And it is that unspoken consensus for which Olathe's Christian conservatives yearn.

Modern societies, according to sociologists, are characterized by a heightened degree not only of "structural pluralism" but of "cultural pluralism" as well. As people with different belief systems intermingle, formerly objective truths are deemed subjective. The Johnson County schools include many liberal mainline Protestants, some Asian immigrants, and the bulk of Kansas City's Jews. Few of those parents agree with the Christian right about what it would mean for the schools to teach only "facts." And two local advocacy groups—the Mainstream Coalition and the Defending Democracy Project—explicitly urge the schools to teach tolerance for the different values of their students.

In fact, it is precisely those opposing voices that make Christian conservatives fear for their kids and propel them into politics. And it is the lack of threat that makes the movement relatively unnecessary in culturally homogeneous small towns. Research by Professors Guth and Green reveals that, all other factors being equal, the more non-Protestants and nonchurchgoers an area has, the more likely it will have a strong Christian-right movement. (And this is true historically as well. According to scholars like Nancy Ammerman of the Hartford Theological Seminary, evangelical-based political movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries flourished not in the South and Midwest but in the Northeast—where urbanization and Catholic immigration undermined native-born Protestant identity.)

Since they remember their childhood schools as factual and apolitical, Christian conservatives in Olathe tend to suspect that pedagogical innovation represents the imposition of values. And this helps explain why phonics has become one of the Christian right's most important issues, even though it would seem at first glance unrelated to its larger moral agenda. Phonics is a method of reading instruction based on sounding words out, as opposed to "whole language," which emphasizes comprehension. Most of Olathe's Christian conservatives grew up learning phonics and feel that the Olathe schools, which blend the two methods, do an inferior job of teaching children to read. To hear them tell it, phonics is the objective, scientific way to teach reading, and "whole language" is based on subjective, unproven theories. As Doug Johnson, a former candidate for precinct committeeman in Olathe, put it: "The whole educational industry embraces fads. It's a cultural thing."

Christian conservatives in Olathe also see "values" creeping into the schools through Outcome Based Education. Outcome Based Education, they argue, seeks to measure students not on their knowledge but on their values. In the words of Nancy Hannahan, a local activist: "It used to be solely academic outcomes. Now they're into areas that are none of the schools' business. Things like trying to measure values, behaviors, attitudes, your beliefs. Those are very subjective."

Proponents of Outcome Based Education would reply that the schools are trying to test whether children can think for themselves rather than simply whether they can memorize information. But, in so doing, they are tacitly acknowledging that, in many areas, the schools do not believe there is any single right answer.

To liberals, emphasizing critical thinking would seem a fair and neutral way to deal with students who have different belief systems. But, to Christian conservatives, there is nothing neutral about telling children that truth is relative; it is a frontal attack on what they believe. As the religious historian George Marsden has noted, fundamentalist Christians are Baconians in a Kantian world. They believe that there is an order, an absolute truth that underlies all things. Since it comes from God, human beings may not always correctly comprehend it. But human beings must seek to comprehend it—and they cannot deny that it exists. When schools make no effort to distinguish between a correct and an incorrect understanding of American history, or of Shakespeare, they undermine the epistemology on which evangelical Christianity rests.

In the eyes of Christian conservatives, schools that abandon their role as arbiters of truth also critically undermine their own authority. And that has profound consequences for the moral development of children. Blaine Freidline, former head of the Johnson County Republican Party, argues, "If morals are relative, then I think every child's going to tend to conclude that, 'Why can't I do what I want to? Who's to say I'm wrong?' Nobody is, nobody is, and their teachers are reinforcing that." For the Christian right, a school that will not tell a student that her view is wrong in the classroom cannot convincingly tell her that it is wrong to use drugs. And, as always, the schools are simply a manifestation of the state—a state that cannot act against a president who repeatedly lies to hide his immorality. Indeed, for the Christian right, the president's actions are not a personality flaw but the logical result of an ideology that endlessly blurs the distinction between right and wrong. For Christian conservatives, the issue in the fall election is not simply the president's behavior but moral relativism itself. And, by talking impeachment, the Republican Congress is trying to capitalize on that.

For Christian conservatives in Olathe, the societal collapse wrought by an overly permissive state is irrefutable. But that view is itself something of a puzzle. Sociologists usually find that people's perception of society follows their personal fortunes. Early scholars, therefore, reasoned that members of the

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Christian right were propelled by "status anxiety" rooted in their declining economic position. But, in fact, Olathe's Christian conservatives are models of upward mobility—frequently, they grew up in small towns, became the first in their families to go to college, and now live thoroughly middle-class, suburban lives. And newer academic work shows that this is true for the Christian right in general.

One explanation for the discrepancy is pre-millennialism, which predisposes evangelicals to look for signs of moral decline as evidence that the Second Coming is near. But that just begs the question: Why does such a pessimistic, otherworldly doctrine appeal to people who are succeeding in the here and now? In Olathe, one answer is that Christian conservatives often feel that their quality of life is not as high as it looks on paper. While acknowledging that their lives are materially better than those of their parents, they also view them as more chaotic and alienating. In this regard, they resemble another group of demographic migrants: the black middle class. Their very economic success has led them closer to people who undermine their identity and away from the comforting embrace of cultural homogeneity.

Christian-right politics, therefore, flow partly from an effort to recreate community in hostile surroundings. Christian conservatives in Olathe spoke frequently of the intimacy and warmth of the towns where they were raised. Charlotte O'Hara, who grew up in rural Bourbon County, Kansas, remembered neighbors coming to help bring in the crops when her father was sick. "It's the rhythm of life we've lost," she said. "It used to be a natural thing to find your sense of community. Now you have to go out and create it."

Like many suburbs, Olathe provides little organic community. It is almost impossible to get anywhere without a car, and the city's social life revolves around places like the Great Mall of the Great Plains, a one-million-square-foot shopping center that opened last year. Because people are moving in so quickly, the city has few well-established neighborhoods. And the explosive population growth has made it difficult to develop a coherent civic identity. In the words of State Senator Karin Brownlee: "It's lost its small-town feel because you just got thousands of people that are probably clueless as to who the mayor is, who their city council person is. When you're smaller, there's more connectedness."

It is partly this absence of established community that has made possible the extraordinary influence of Olathe's churches. In fact, Olathe's evangelical churches sometimes seem as much community centers as houses of worship. Olathe Bible Church, for instance, offers more than 40 "small groups"—organized by age, marital status, and interest—in which adults meet once a week in congregants' homes to pray for one another. Children have their own small weekly meetings called "cell groups." Olathe Bible also runs parenting classes; separate men's and women's weight-loss programs; aerobics classes; a weekly dinner for older members; father-and-son camping expeditions; a men's only "Sports Blowout"; family swim nights; and a group called "Moms in Touch," in which mothers pray for their children. A church pamphlet titled "Created for Community" explains that socializing with other Christians is not a "spiritual 'extra' or an add-on" but is central to God's plan and the church's work.

Sometimes church community seems to eclipse civic community altogether. In the nearby municipality of Shawnee, the city government doesn't run a Fourth of July celebration. So the 1,000-member Full Faith Church of Love assumes the responsibility—and hosts the festivities for the entire town.

Churches like Olathe Bible and Full Faith fulfill the yearning Christian conservatives feel for the social system and moral values of the places where they grew up. Yet they are nothing like the small, apolitical evangelical churches that actually existed a generation ago in rural Kansas. And this is perhaps the Christian right's chief irony. It is a movement based largely on nostalgia for an old order, and yet that nostalgia leads it to tremendous innovations: the establishment of megachurches, the home-school movement, the reworking of pre-millennialism to sanction political activism. In a world changing so fast, even the attempt to stand still ends up creating new things.

There is nothing wrong with adapting old institutions and values to new surroundings—every migrant and immigrant group in American history has done that. The danger for the Christian right is that, like other movements that stress orthodoxy, it prefers to deny the process of modification in which it is involved. Christian conservatives too often suggest that they simply believe what traditional Americans and traditional Christians have always believed—which implies that their opponents are religious or national heretics. (Movement activists, for instance, often use the term "Christian" to refer exclusively to evangelicals—as in, "She used to be a Catholic, but now she is a Christian.") Were the Christian right forced to defend its beliefs empirically, without the cloak of authenticity, it is unlikely those beliefs would change. But the movement would pursue them more modestly, more conservatively.

Because the Christian right consists largely of people who grew up in one world and tried to recreate it in another, it is hard to know what will happen to the movement's next generation. Will teenagers growing up in strip-mall suburbs—with no experience of homogeneous small towns—find themselves unmoved by the cultural ideal that animates their parents? Or will the disappearance of any actual connection to small-town life make the myths that much more compelling?

When I read in the *Olathe Daily News* that the city had demolished its oldest grain elevator, I wondered at first why no one protested. And then I drove past a country-style restaurant, built three years ago, part of a chain throughout the Midwest. And next to the entrance I saw a handsome replica grain elevator, framing the shopping mall that stretched into the distance. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Stars in Their Courses

Two big stars, two big vehicles. Robert De Niro is in **Ronin** (MGM), Meryl Streep is in **One True Thing** (Universal). This juxtaposition, accidental though it is, has an air of fate about it.

First, a glance at the films themselves. "Ronin" is the Japanese term for masterless samurai, swords for hire. The classic tale of the 47 ronin, mentioned in this picture, has been filmed numerous times by Japanese directors. (And John Masefield wrote a play on the legend, called *The Faithful.*) This screenplay by J.D. Zeik and Richard Weisz (a pen name for David Mamet) is about guns for hire—experienced political activist-terrorists, here employed by an Irish group, carefully disowned at the end by the IRA.

They are hired to get hold of a small metal travel case that is in the hands of people who are not identified. Nor are the contents of the case ever explained. The action begins and ends in Paris, with an interlude in Nice, and consists of one fracas after another. The film could have been expanded or (I wish) condensed. Many of these battles involve high-speed car chases, including that old favorite, a chase going the wrong way on a one-way highway. The only novelty in these chases, as directed by John Frankenheimer, is that three bystanders get hurt. Usually, mad car chases through narrow streets hurt no one.

De Niro is (perhaps) a former CIA man. He's the sort of canny operator who can, let's say, walk into a room and see at a glance that the wallpaper was changed 17 years ago. Taciturn, knowing, tough, when he's wounded he even coaches the friend who is extracting a bullet from his side.

In Streep's film she plays a housewife and mother in a college town. The screenplay, by Karen Croner from an Anna Quindlen novel, is about the disruption of a young woman's life when her mother (Streep) develops cancer and the daughter has to give up her career to come home and care for her because the husband-father is a busy professor in the local university. The only real progress in the story is the daughter's discovery of her father's self-centered character, plus the fact that the loving, devoted Streep has known it all along.

Streep does what she can to sketch in vivid marginalia around this Pillsbury-ad mom; her small inflections and responses give the part a little shine. The advance of the disease is graphically done by her and her makeup man, but this is simulation more than acting.

When I saw these two films, I kept thinking, "Of course." Both De Niro and Streep have encountered stock roles before, but now, in middle age, they seem to be stepping into inevitabilities. For De Niro there had to be a Bogart offspring; for Streep, the kitchen virtuoso. Sex is still a possibility for a male star of De Niro's age, not for Streep; and activity is still very much a possibility for him while she is now only a victim, not only of disease.

But these two roles, it would seem, have been waiting for them as they moved along through their careers. De Niro has made a full share of bad choices in the past, but I felt that he took this cliché part in this muddled picture because it's the tunnel through which his track runs at this stage of things. Streep has even fewer choices as she ages but, as against De Niro, could at least tell herself that there was a chance to mine some slivers of truth in her part.

We hear about the short career spans of athletes and dancers. American film stars—particularly but not only women—might have something to say on the subject.

Projections 8 is the latest in the series of journals in paperbound-book form that are published by Faber and Faber, edited by John Boorman and Walter Donohue. This new one is an anomaly. All of the previous seven *Projections* were written by filmmakers. Now the editors have included large sections by and about critics. "A pall of dismay hangs over the craft of film criticism," says Boorman in his preface. Only here and there, I might add: but I'm glad that he and Donohue felt it strongly enough to invite comments by critics and to reprint selections from recent publications that seemed pertinent.

The introduction to these sections is by Philip French of the (London) *Observer*, who provides a tight, sensible overview of the "craft" from 1898 to the present. The contributions range widely in insight, but they bear out Boorman's comment in his preface (which he underscored recently at Telluride).

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Lolita. *Dominique Swain is a lissome nymphet, Jeremy Irons is an OK Humbert Humbert, Adrian Lyne's direction is lubricious. More faithful to the novel than the 1962 version; still, the divorce from Nabokov's prose reduces it. (Reviewed 10/5/98)* **A Merry War.** *A 1930s revolt against English philistinism by an angry young poet. Well acted, well derived from Orwell's* Keep the Aspidistra Flying. *(9/7/98)* **Regeneration.** *Intelligent, acute rendering of Pat Barker's book about Siegfried Sassoon's stay in a military hospital during World War I. (9/14&21/98)* **Saving Private Ryan.** *A good-enough war movie, with a tremendous opening sequence. D-Day in France is done by Steven Spielberg in top form; the following mission seems puny after it. (8/17&24/98)*—**SK**

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Many of the critics "had complaints similar to those of the filmmakers: their editors forced them to lead with the mainstream Hollywood movies; lack of space to write seriously; pressure from distributors," and "the debilitating effect on critics' psyches of constant battering from big-budget mindless movies." It might be questioned whether removal of all these burdens would raise film criticism to Parnassus, but the same question could be asked of filmmakers. Meanwhile, the parallels of the plaints are wry indeed.

The second half of *Projections 8* is, as before, by and about filmmakers. Two specially rewarding items are interviews by Godfrey Cheshire of Abbas Kiarostami and by Ronald Bergan of Luise Rainer. Who is she? Many may ask and may be surprised to learn that this German-born actress won the Best Actress Oscar two years in a row, for *The Great Ziegfeld* (1936) and *The Good Earth* (1937). Remarkably quickly after that one-two punch, she dropped out of films, not entirely by choice. She is now 87, living in London, the widow of an English book publisher. Her interview is an inside view of an interesting time and an unusual life.

The most stimulating remarks in the issue come, predictably enough, from Walter Murch, the outstanding film editor, whose most recent work is the reconstituted *Touch of Evil* and who is the author of *In the Blink of an Eye.* In the course of a conversation Murch says, "If anyone were to ask me who fathered cinema, I would say Edison, Beethoven, and Flaubert."

Murch's explanation—amplification—of this remark is too long to quote here, but in itself is worth the price of *Projections 8.* •

Jed Perl on Art

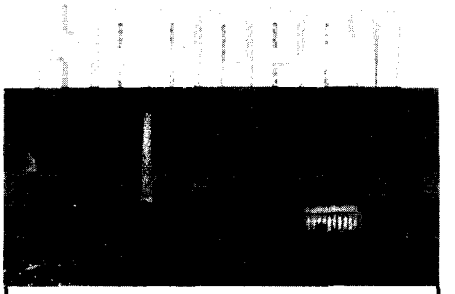
The Trouble with Photography

I.

Art and photography, strange but exciting bedfellows, have too often been passed off as the happiest of married couples, and this is certainly the case today. Museums, galleries, and publishers are awash with photographic projects. In the auction houses prices for vintage prints now regularly go well over a hundred thousand dollars, and there seems to be a fairly solid market for contemporary work as well. Photography is one of the big art-world success stories of the past quarter century—but the very normalization of the medium's high-art position has been paralleled by a sharp diminishment of photography's magic, and a cause-and-effect relationship cannot be ruled out. For any number of reasons, there is almost nothing left, certainly in contemporary photography, of the fascinatingly anomalous, square-peg-in-a-round-hole status that once made the photograph-as-art such an unexpected wonder.

During most of the 160-odd years since Daguerre and Talbot first fixed shadows, what has mesmerized artists and aficionados alike is the tension between the photograph as the product of a technology in a hurry and the photograph as an object of pure contemplation. Among the photographers who have achieved that rapturous betwixt-and-betweenness, few are just now as beloved as Julia Margaret Cameron, who in the 1860s produced a series of portraits of women, which are the subject of a show that is currently at the Art Institute of Chicago. (The magnificently produced catalogue, printed in soft yet lustrous browns, greens, and grays, is published by Yale.) Cameron called upon friends and relatives to represent pre-Raphaelite angels, Madonnas, goddesses, and spirits, and what holds us in these big-scaled images is the self-conscious shiver of excitement with which Cameron's nineteenth-century women settle into their mythic-dreamer roles. Cameron's eccentrically blurred effects are the work of an ultra-inspired amateur, who can turn awkwardnesses into inevitabilities precisely because she has no fixed idea about what constitutes a successful result. The work has a "backstage" excitement. Cameron wrests a crazily soulful experimental theater from the dreariest scenarios of nineteenth-century painting.

Photographers scoop up experience. Almost from the invention of the medium, photographic technology made it possible to turn life into imagery more nearly instantaneously than anybody ever had before. Artists now had an unheard-of ability to give flashes of intuition and random impressions a visual staying



DANIEL PATRICK
MOYNIHAN

"A succinct historical analysis
of the American culture of secrecy."
—*Publishers Weekly*

"[Moynihan] analyzes the roots of America's obsession with government secrecy
and convincingly pleads for its dismantling. . . . An intelligent, ironic postmortem on a system that is not only outdated but was flawed from the start."
—*Kirkus Reviews*

"Moynihan has traced how the system of governmental secrecy developed
during the twentieth century and how this secrecy blighted prudent policy making. The documents that [Moynihan has] unearthed prove dramatically how secrecy changed the history of the Cold War."
—Richard Gid Powers,
from the Introduction

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power. There has always been something beguilingly paradoxical about photographic art, a delicious uneasiness that comes from the insistence on lingering over rapidly passing events. You might think of art and photography as facing off as tradition and improvisation. You might go further and think of them as star-crossed lovers, whose intense attraction was fueled—and given piquancy—by a sense that they would probably eventually go their separate ways.

Whatever the outcome of this long-running relationship turns out to be (or has already become), I think that everybody will agree that photography's newcomer status is a thing of the past. Like so many of the great nineteenth-century discoveries, photography has always demonstrated its technological power through the ability to devour its own innovations, and that process continues today. In the past few years, the very basics of the medium, such as the negative and the photographic print, have been overtaken by digitalization, so that the reproduction of reality seems to be becoming one more job for the computer. Photographers who still make prints on paper are in some respects working in an antiquated technique, soon to look as old-fashioned as the woodcut and the lithograph, each of which was in its day the cutting edge of artistic technology.

In the art schools, the camera and the computer are widely regarded as tools of the trade like any others, no more or less useful than paint and canvas, or pencil and paper, or clay. Many would now say that a photographic image, whether produced by a computer or a conventional negative, is just another art image. Photography has triumphed in the art world. Yet with that hard-won stature has come the collapse of the make-it-new element of surprise that once gave the medium its clarifying aura. In today's galleries, where photographic technology is business-as-usual, photographic magic is objectified, frozen, recycled as kitsch, schlock, and shock. Photography is in many respects the new-old thing, an aging medium, and this makes it altogether different from painting, which, because it is as old as the hills but still with us, is by now ageless, forever renewable.

Photography's aging process is complicated by its relationship with movies, television, and video, all of which can be said to have fulfilled the photograph's promise of capturing life on the run. In museums and universities, photographic and film studies tend to be Balkanized and photographs are treated with the reverence once accorded to cloisonné enamels or Sienese panel paintings. I suspect that the push to give photography an ivory-tower prestige may be fueled by a sense that this is the only way for photography to go, granted that it has lost out to the multiplex.

Where once films were regarded as photographs that moved, now photographs often strike us as frozen film.

JULIA MARGARET CAMERON, *JULIA JACKSON*, 1867

Courtesy Art Institute of Chicago

Movies are part of the collective memory that photographers carry around in their heads, and when we look at contemporary photography we are as often seeing the world filtered through movie conventions as through photographic conventions. The result is to give a lot of contemporary work, whether Tina Barney's, Clegg and Guttmann's, or, sometimes, Nan Goldin's, a dispiritingly claustrophobic impact, as if everybody had been stranded in the same fishbowl with the same memories. Some recycle the snapshot style of Weegee, or of Cartier-Bresson, or of Robert Frank. Others refer to B-movies or '60s art-house films. Yet others dip back into the nineteenth century, mimicking, in the case of Adam Fuss, the dawn-of-an-era romanticism of early scientific photography.

Most of contemporary photography seems predicated on the conviction that there is nothing new under the sun, and of course for an art world that is thoroughly mired in its own been-there-done-that postmodern funk, the photographer's situation may look like everybody's situation. There are many scholars who are inclined to believe that the entire history of modern art is wired into photography in one way or another, and that is an opinion that is probably based more on their fondness for the photo-saturated art scene of the 1990s than on a particularly deep grasp of what painting and sculpture do. The art public does not by and large comprehend the essential difference between the improvisational spirit of photography and the bedrock of painting, which is radical because it is about revelations drawn with conscious purpose from long-running traditions. For those who see postmodernism as the apotheosis of an art that lives not by its traditions but by its wits, photography is the ticket, whether we are talking about Cindy Sherman's melodramas, with their scrambling of Old Master compositions and B-movie style, or Annette Messager's installations, where photographic fragments of figures become landmarks in the overall macramé-jungle look.

II.

In 1974, the critic A.D. Coleman announced that "sometime within the last five years, photography devoured the art world." The movement that provoked this observation, photorealist painting, actually faded pretty fast, but Coleman was basically on the mark, and if photography has not yet devoured the art museums, it certainly has more gallery space than ever before. In the past few years there have been so many museum shows about photography that it has begun to seem as if the entire history of the medium is flashing before our eyes. In 1998, traveling around American museums, we have shows of Matthew Brady, Julia Margaret Cameron, Paul Strand, Brassaï, and Walker Evans.

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ART SCENES *galleries, exhibits, and events*

SWANN GALLERIES 104 East 25th Street, New York, NY 10010, 212-254-4710, fax: 212-979-1017. Monday - Friday, 10 AM - 6 PM. Selected auctions: October 5th: *19th and 20th Century Photographs:* Native Americans, modern European and American masters, contemporary images. Illustrated catalogue $25 in the U.S., $35 elsewhere. October 15th:. *Autographs:* featuring highlights from the Personal Archives of Arthur J. Goldberg, Secretary of Labor, Supreme Court Justice and Representative to the U.N.; Sigmund Freud family letters; presentation album of signed photographs of Ernest Hemingway; signed copy of George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*; early George Bush letter on the Eisenhower-Stevenson presidential race. Illustrated catalogue $25. October 22nd: *Modern Literature*: including science fiction, fantasy and detective literature; first editions in dust jackets of Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* and William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury*. Catalogue $15. October 29th: *Magic* including books, periodicals, signed and inscribed photographs, and posters, and featuring books and photographs by Harry Houdini inscribed to his older brother, Nat Weiss. Illustrated catalogue $15. November 5th: *Science and Medicine*: including Rocketry and Space Flight, and Dentistry. Catalogue $10. November 12th: *Works of Art on Paper*: featuring museum-quality old master, 19th-century, modern and contemporary prints and drawings, most from private collections. Illustrated catalogue $25 in U.S., $35 elsewhere. Please write or call for preview hours, quarterly newsletter with full auction schedule.

HOWARD GREENBERG GALLERY 120 Wooster Street, New York, NY 10012, 212-334-0010, fax: 212-941-7479. Tuesday - Saturday, 11 AM - 6 PM. September 17th - October 24th, *Vintage Gordon Parks: 50 Years in Black and White*. An important retrospective of the work of this legendary photojournalist. Included will be a rare selection of vintage photographs from his early work with FSA, on assignment at *Vogue*, and two decades of *LIFE*, as well as color work.

BONNI BENRUBI GALLERY 52 East 76th Street, New York, NY 10021, 212-517-3766, fax: 212-288-7815. *Abelardo Morell: New Work*: October 22nd - December 6th. This show will present new work made within the last two years. There will be pictures taken during his fellowship at the Gardner Museum in Boston, pictures made for the soon-to-be-released Dutton book of *Alice in Wonderland*, and a new exploration into using water to form words and letters. Of course, there will be one or two exciting new camera obscuras included as well.

ROBERT MILLER GALLERY 41 East 57th Street, New York, NY 10022, 212-980-5454. Tuesday - Saturday 10 AM - 6 PM. October 14th - November 14th: *Al Held (The Last Series: 1964-1965)* is a powerful group of Held's small paintings that has never been shown before. Held explains that these works "represented the iconography of that period in miniature." *Brassaï: Paris de Nuit* takes one on a nocturnal journey through the streets of Paris in 1933. The show features 55 images from the series and captures what Brassaï calls "the underground world" comprised of "the real people" who "... belong to the world of pleasure, of love, vice, crime, drugs" (catalogues are available of both shows).

SALANDER O'REILLY GALLERIES 20 East 79th Street, New York, NY 10021, 212-879-6606. Monday - Saturday, 9:30 AM - 5:30 PM. October 1st - October 31st, *Josef Sudek:* From his surreal still life's to the haunted sunlight of a magician's garden, this Czech artist's pigment rich prints are canonical to the world of photography. *Robert Albert Blakelock:* This late nineteenth century painter's somber oils reveal the beauty of the American landscape. We are pleased to present a large selection of both paintings and watercolors in this exceptional gathering of works. *Graham Nickson: "Small Works"*: an exhibition of works on paper, both watercolors and drawings by the New York Studio School Director, Graham Nickson.

PACE WILDENSTEIN 32 East 57th Street, New York, NY 10022, 212-421-3292. Fax: 212-421-0835. Website: www.pacewildenstein.com. Tuesday - Friday, 9:30 AM - 6 PM, Saturday 10 AM - 6 PM. *"Joel Shapiro"*: New bronze and wood sculpture on view at 32 East 57th Street and 142 Greene Street, October 16th - November 14th. *"Lucas Samaras: Gold"*: November 18th - January 16th, 1999.

PACE WILDENSTEIN 142 Greene Street, New York, NY 10012, 212-431-9224. Fax: 212-431-9280. Tuesday - Saturday, 10 AM - 6 PM. *"Joel Shapiro"*: New bronze and wood sculpture on view at 32 East 57th Street and 142 Greene Street, October 16th - November 14th. *"Philip-Lorca diCorcia: Street Work"*: November 20th - January 16th, 1999.

PACE WILDENSTEIN 9540 Wilshire Boulevard, Beverly Hills, CA 90212, 310-205-5522. Fax: 310-205-5527. Tuesday - Saturday, 10 AM - 6 PM. *"Antoni Tapiès"*: first floor. *"William Wegman: Recent Work"*: second floor. Please call gallery for exhibition details.

ANITA SHAPOLSKY GALLERY 152 East 65th Street, New York, NY 10021, 212-452-1094, fax: 212-452-1096. Tuesday - Saturday, 11 AM - 6 PM. *Ernest Briggs and Michael Loew*: Abstract painting from the 1950s to the 1970s. October 1st to November 7th, 1998. Ernest Briggs (1923-1984) and Michael Loew (1907-1985), two painters of the 1950s generation who developed a unique artistic vision that generated energy from the dynamic period of Abstract Expressionism. Briggs' work is characterized by powerful rhythmic compositions and Loew's is concerned with geometrically inspired translucent color arrangements. Both artists are of great historical importance; their singular vision penetrated the core of abstract painting, and they found new ways to explore its essence that was recognized by their peers and was influential upon artists of succeeding generations.

Please turn to page 35 for more ArtScenes.

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There is also a great deal of interest in painting-and-photography overlaps. Picasso's wide-ranging interest in the medium was the subject of a revealing show, "Picasso and Photography: The Dark Mirror," organized by Anne Baldassari of the Musée Picasso in Paris, and presented at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston last winter. Baldassari makes a strong case that one of the sources for the figures in *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* was a cache of turn-of-the-century ethnographic photographs of Africans that the artist owned; her study suggests that the clarifying impact of photography could at least on occasion inspire a new kind of painterly reduction. In the Aleksandr Rodchenko retrospective that was at the Museum of Modern Art over the summer, we saw an artist who moved almost in the opposite direction, from the peremptory simplicity of a radical abstract painting to a kind of photography that derived its stripped-down structures in portraiture and streetscape from a painter's ideas of iconic concentration. Degas produced something like 40 photographs, mostly of family and friends, and, gathered together in a show that opens at the Metropolitan Museum of Art this fall, they give us a feeling for the psychological temperature of the artist's fin-de-siècle world.

At the Equitable Gallery in New York (until the end of October) there is an interesting show devoted to the Julien Levy Gallery, which in New York in the '30s and '40s pioneered the exhibition of photography, Atget's and others', while showing Surrealist and Neoromantic painting and representing Joseph Cornell and Arshile Gorky. Like his friend Lincoln Kirstein, Levy was a young man with taste, guts, money, and a Harvard education. If he had done nothing else for photography, he would be remembered for helping Berenice Abbott rescue Atget's photographs and negatives after the reclusive man's death. But Levy's gallery, which was a center of high-bohemian hijinks, did much more than that. This was one of the places in America where modern austerity first flirted with kitsch and camp, and photography was at the heart of that encounter.

If the measure of an art dealer's stature is the way we later regard his taste in artists, then Levy ought to rank pretty high, since his picks, certainly when it comes to photography, are among the ones we still look to. Henri Cartier-Bresson, who exhibited with Levy in 1933, turns ninety this year, and the Bulfinch Press has added a new book, *Tête à tête*, to the five books by and about him that it already has in print. A Cartier-Bresson portrait often doubles as a portrait of a place where a person lives, and turning over the pages of *Tête à tête*, which includes more than a hundred photographs, many of writers and other artists, you have the excitement of finding out what others regard as their familiar surroundings. Edward Weston never had a one-man show at Levy's, but his son Brett did, and he figures in Charis Wilson's recently published recollections of the days when she was married to Edward. Especially the first 100 pages of *Through Another Lens: My Years with Edward Weston* (North Point Press / Farrar, Straus and Giroux), written in collaboration with Wendy Madar, are a remarkable addition to what we already know about Weston from his *Daybooks*.

Two recent books are small classics in the history of the medium. Brassaï, whom Julien Levy praised in his memoirs for his "impish vivacity," appears with *Letters to My Parents* (University of Chicago Press). Helen Gee, whose new memoir, *Limelight* (University of New Mexico Press), is named after the first gallery in the country devoted exclusively to photography, which she operated in Greenwich Village in the second half of the '50s, tips her hat to Levy, too. Gee, who founded Limelight as a combination gallery and coffeehouse, has given us an unrivaled account of the bohemian infatuation with photography. Gee has an unusually direct and matter-of-fact prose style, and even as she is recounting what sometimes amounts to little more than the ordinary travails that come with running a small business, she manages to preserve the very air of those years when she and her friends were beginning to put the history of photography together in new ways.

III.

The history of photography has become a mainstream cultural industry, but the more closely you consider the great figures who make up that story, the more you will wonder at the extent to which serendipity, combined with tremendous energy and intelligence, is at the core of the medium's most remarkable achievements. At the beginning of his *Letters to My Parents*, the 21-year-old Gyula Halász, who has just arrived in Berlin in 1920, has no thought of photography. The young man who a decade later will be known to one and all as Brassaï—a name he took from his hometown of Brassó—is concerned instead with getting enrolled in an art school and making a living sending articles to newspapers back in Hungary, with the help of his father, who acts as his agent in the early years. From the letters—which often deal with the details of assignments and the nightmare of working for periodicals that have sometimes vanished before the copy reaches them—it is evident that Brassaï was not thinking about photography as a vocation until the beginning of the '30s.

In 1933, only four years after he first handled a camera, Brassaï published *Paris de nuit*, the album of photographs in which the old familiar charm of Paris gave way to a dark-toned, almost Expressionist city, a city that is unsettled, insomniacal, bizarre. The photographs in *Paris de nuit*, taken with whatever light was available from lamps of one kind or another, were a technical feat, and they are all the more compelling because they feel so off-the-cuff. Brassaï's strength is his openness to experience, the nonjudgmental generosity that fills image after image and suffuses his letters, too. His photographs and his prose reflect the same easygoing assurance. He seems to be saying that you have your good days and bad days, but that the main thing is never to doubt that you will go on. That is the spirit you feel when, practically as a beginner, he photographs Bijou, the old prostitute sitting in a café in Montmartre, with her heavy make-up, her neck and arms wrapped in cheap pearls, and her eyes as dark, enigmatic, and beautiful as those of any Fayum portrait.

So many remarkable accounts have been written of Paris in the '20s that one might well ask why anybody needs to read another. But Brassaï's record is like no one else's. These letters, written on the fly to parents who were obviously both adoring and anxious, offer an absolutely unique picture of the giddily manic emotions of a young man who was just barely keeping his head above water in a city where everything had reached the boiling point. Brassaï was an improviser: that is what made him such a great photographer.

In *Letters to My Parents* you feel the breathless exuberance of urban possibilities. You understand that it is sometimes not clear to Brassaï himself if his heart is beating faster because he has just been invited to a fancy tea party in a "palace on the avenue du Bois de Boulogne (opposite Anatole France's villa)" and been introduced as "*le grand peintre hongrois*," or because "I slept with one franc on my table, and the worry that my landlord might catch me again as I was leaving and ask for the rent, which I had promised to pay for certain two days before." For Brassaï, seeing the city from the ground up is not an artistic idea; that's just the way he experienced it. His unvarnished view of Paris, immortalized in *Paris de nuit*, is the only view he had.

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ART SCENES *galleries, exhibits, and events*

ALBANY CENTER GALLERIES 23 Monroe Street, Albany, NY 12210, 518-462-4778. Monday - Friday, 10AM - 4:30 PM, Thursday 10 AM - 7 PM, Sunday 12 NOON - 4 PM. September 11th - October 23rd, *Leigh Wen and Harry Orlyk*. October 25th, 6 PM - 11 PM, *Masque Gala*, including a silent auction of created masks by original artists. Call 518-462-4775 for invitations. November 6th - January 1st, *Bobbie Bowden and Robert Moylan*.

ROBERT KLEIN GALLERY 38 Newbury Street, Boston, MA 02116, 617-267-7997. E-mail: rlklein@tiac.net, Web: www.robertkleingallery.com. September 11th - October 24th, *Susan Unterberg: "Water Dreams", Sally Gall: "Between Worlds"*: October 22nd - December 6th. Twenty years experience, an extensive collection and broad expertise in 19th and 20th century classic and contemporary photographs. Featuring work by Ansel Adams, Charles Sheeler, Edward Weston, Tom Baril, Helev Levitt, Denny Moers, W.H. Fox Talbot, Eugene Atget, Diane Arbus, Herb Ritts, Sally Gall, Susan Unterberg, Irving Penn, Clarence White and many more....

BROOKE ALEXANDER 59 Wooster Street, New York, NY 10012, 212-925-4338, fax: 212-941-9565, e-mail: brookealex@earthlink.net. Tuesday - Saturday, 11 AM - 6 PM. *Exhibition: Georg Herold "Compu comp virtual visualities equivacs hirmapdyes"* manifests itself in crude materiality (wall sculptures, mounted panels), while alluding to the omnipresent computer. New editions available: Uta Barth, Charles Long, Jorge Pardo, Richard Tuttle, Nicola Tyson, Franz West.

EARL GALLERY 429 West 14th Street, New York, NY 10014, 212-627-9893. Tuesday - Saturday, 12 NOON - 6 PM. Opening reception, November 6th, 7 PM - 10 PM, *14th Street Painters Exhibition 12* with eighty pieces of art selected from several hundred artists of diverse backgrounds: intellectual dust to objects of desire to works layered in brightly colored pieces of art.

GALLERY TARANTO 39 West 14th Street, New York, NY 10011, 212-691-6070. Monday - Friday, 9 AM - 7 PM, Saturday 11 AM - 5 PM. August 21st - November 25th, *The 8th Annual Headshot Show*: Featuring sixty-seven photographers in the 1998-99 Headshot Photographers Guide and Fall '98 HIP-CD, the Headshot Show presents over three hundred images of inspired thespians by New York's top specialists in the field. Visitors to the show will be able to get copies of the Guide, which contains the HIP-CD after October 1st, free of charge. Contact Lorena La Grassa or Ken Taranto.

LEICA GALLERY 670 Broadway, New York, NY 10012, 212-777-3051. Tuesday through Friday, 11 AM - 6 PM; Saturday 12 NOON - 6 PM. September 11th - October 24th, Main Gallery Area: *Susan Meiselas (Magnum): Intimate Strangers: Carnival Strippers (1972 - 1975) and Pandora's Box (1995)*. The former, black and white photographs of women working as strippers at England Fairs. The latter, color photographs of Pandora's Box, a self-described "Disneyland of Domination" in New York City. Oskar Barnack Room: *Geoff Winningham's Rites of Fall: High School Football in Texas*. Black and white photographs from his 1979 critically-acclaimed book.

FIRST STREET GALLERY 560 Broadway, New York, NY 10012, 212-226-9127. September 29th - October 17th. *Mari Lyons, "Scenes From the City and Other Recent Works"*: Paintings, pastels, watercolors: Images of the city contrasted with more intimate studies of the model.

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DAVID BEITZEL GALLERY 102 Prince Street, New York, NY 10012, 212-219-2863, fax: 212-941-7158, website:www.Beitzelgallery.com. Tuesday - Saturday, 10 AM - 6 PM. *David Kapp* through October 17th. *Robert Harms*: October 22nd - November 21st (a fully illustrated catalogue will accompany this exhibition) and *Andrew Young* in the Project Room.

WHEELER GALLERY 228 Angell Street, Providence, RI 02906, 401-421-9230. Tuesday through Friday, 12 NOON - 5PM, Sunday 3 PM - 5 PM. *Younghee Choi Martin: "Works on Paper"*. A selection of twenty charcoal and pencil drawings evoke powerful emotional force, inspired by images, mythological characters, and situations from "The Waste Land" by T.S. Eliot. Full color catalogue with an essay by Martica Sawin available. September 25th - October 15th.

THE PARKS GALLERY 140 Kit Carson, Taos, NM 87571, 505-751-0343. Website: www.arttaos.com. *"The Flying Kimono's Adventures in New Dimensions," by Melissa Zink*, a new series combining original painting and sculpture with collage and color copier printing. Titles of pieces point to the profundity and the humor contained in the series—"The Flying Kimono accepts that his reality is another's fantasy" and "The Flying Kimono reflects the influence of a benign planet." Call for photos or video.

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IV.

There aren't many enduring books written by photographers, but I think that Brassaï's *Letters* will prove to be one of them. Although Brassaï's book touches only tangentially on the photographic scene of the '20s and '30s, his leap into greatness with *Paris de nuit* obviously had something to do with his coming to the camera at a time when the temper of art in general was so attuned to the medium's inherently (and, strangely enough, not contradictory) purist and surrealist aspects. If Brassaï often emphasized the medium's surrealist potential, its purist side was embraced (though not in name) by Edward Weston, who, half a world away, in Mexico and California, during the very years when Brassaï was writing to his parents, was composing the greatest literary document left by a photographer, his *Daybooks*. Those recollections are brought to mind now that Weston's second wife, Charis Wilson, has offered a sort of epilogue in *Through Another Lens*.

In many respects Weston and Brassaï are opposite numbers. The Californian is a master of meticulously plotted formal deliberation; he regards everything he sees with the same distilled elegance. The Parisian is all impulse and intuition; he is unabashedly, almost cheerfully fascinated by the dark side of life. Yet both photographers reflect the bohemian spirit of the places in which they lived such full lives. The starkly oracular look of Weston's photographs catches the artistic mood of the Mexico and California that he knew, much as Brassaï's harum-scarum approach reflects between-the-wars Paris.

Edward Weston is the same cool sensualist in his life that he is in his art. In her memoir, Charis relates how Weston had himself introduced to her at a concert in Carmel in 1934, when she was 19 and he was 48. He invited her to come see him, but seems to have left it to his then current lover, Sonya Noskowiak, to arrange for Charis to model for him. Once that had been set up, Edward left it to Charis to seduce him—or at least to make the first move. "What followed," she writes, "was as great a revelation as Edward's photographs. I thought of myself as a sophisticated woman of the world, but now I learned how limited all my previous experience had been, as what had always seemed to me to be a branch of playacting became unmistakably real."

Charis Wilson is writing for an audience that has probably already read the *Daybooks*, and anybody who has will not resist the thought that at least at the outset her affair with Weston was just an infinitely more sophisticated game of play-acting than she had known before. Six years earlier, Weston had written that it was "the glamour which surrounds me" that pulled women in. He thought of himself as "a poor lover, in that I have no time nor desire for sustained interest.... The idea means more to me than the actuality." Yet Weston's nifty penchant for self-analysis was surely part of his erotic charm. In Weston's photographs, we are turned on to things slowly, deliberately, and the result is a new kind of heat. He must have had the same effect on his lovers. He is a man who could watch his own heart ticking, and let his lover watch it, too. He and Charis were together for a decade, eventually marrying; she became immersed in his work, and wrote texts for *California and the West* and *The Cats of Wildcat Hill*.

Brassaï's story suggests the extent to which photography has always been an ideal medium for the free-spirited, for those who trust to intuition. Weston trusts his intuition, and his deliberateness enables him to go another step, and convince us, at least for a while, that his intuitions are in fact the natural order of things. Weston's most famous portraits of Charis, the studies of 1936 in which she is naked amidst the Pacific coast dunes, are works of extraordinary artifice which we are meant to accept as one man's fascinating idea of naturalness. But then Edward was the kind of man who could arrange matters exactly to his liking and convince others that this was simply the way it was. Charis describes how she came to live in Southern California with three of Edward's four sons from his first marriage, all of them as youthful and fresh-faced and attractive as she, while the mother of his sons, Flora, to whom he was still officially married, remained supportive of Edward in various ways (hoping, Charis suspects, he might some day return). Weston's obsession with the perfect, unretouched print was related to his idea of a life lived deliberately, without illusions (except his own). Charis recounts Edward telling students, "A good picture—in photography or any other medium—is most likely to be produced by the artist who upsets the apple cart, snaps his fingers at the rules, and does as he pleases."

V.

From Cameron through Brassaï and Weston to Robert Frank, photography has been the bohemian art *par excellence*. This is a medium which puts a premium on improvisation, flexibility, the spirit of the moment. It is the art for those who live by their wits, for men and women who may have thought of being painters but lacked the training, or found too many other interests impinging, or had no taste for the solitude of the studio. But from the outset there has been a paradox built into the unconventional status of the photographer. As an artist, the photographer might be the freest of men or women, never tethered by the kinds of traditions that a painter can hardly avoid. But photography was always so much the medium that the man in the street believed belonged to him, that in the end photographers have had to admit that it is the public that decides what the future of photography will look like. This is probably the ultimate modern medium, in that even as the camera promises to liberate artists from their past, it ties them ever more tightly to the imperatives of mass taste.

In the 1850s, Matthew Brady turned the professional portrait studio into a kind of salon or museum, where people went not just to have their pictures taken but to see pictures of the rich and famous. Nowadays, almost nobody goes to a professional portrait photographer, but the art museum has become a photographic salon, where the history of the medium is a memory machine, provoking thoughts about the way we were, or wanted to be, or thought other people believed us to be, all the way back to our great-great-grandparents (which is anyway farther back than most people want to think). Photography is the most accessible kind of modern art in the sense that even when the technique is resoundingly antitraditional, the message can have a tidal-force emotional power. In part, museums latch onto photography because of its publicity value. A photograph is far more likely than a painting or a sculpture to become a cultural flashpoint or an op-ed opportunity.

The value of a photograph as evidence in a legal or medical sense may be rapidly receding in the face of the apparently irrefutable veracity of DNA, but in the museum and the gallery photography can still seem to be art's last hope of engaging people with the issues of the day. Sebastião Salgado, the Brazilian-born photographer who for several decades has been photographing the face of poverty in South America and Africa, has a feeling for textures and surfaces that brings us close to his subjects. Some of the conditions that Salgado shows us are so dire that all he can do is register his own horror; but where others might see only melodrama, he is sometimes able to find a more complicated mix of pride, imagination, wit, and resolve. Among a small group of Salgado's work that was at the

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Yancey Richardson Gallery last spring was a fascinating photograph of a gently handsome young man, with a child in the crook of his arm and his wide-eyed gaze echoed by the eyes of an inexpensive print of Christ tacked to the wall.

Documentary photography does seem to be making a comeback in the '90s. David Goldblatt's photographs of South African vernacular architecture, which were at the Museum of Modern Art over the summer, don't wrench you the way Salgado's sometimes do, but his lucid, foursquare compositions have a quiet emotional power; he regards terrible conditions forthrightly. One rallying point for photographers who want to return the medium to a traditional focus on direct, unmediated evidence is the four-year-old magazine *DoubleTake*, which is edited by Robert Coles. *DoubleTake* endeavors to combine first-rate writing and photography, and continues a tradition that goes at least as far back as the collaboration of James Agee and Walker Evans on *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. Still, *DoubleTake* has a smattering of postmodern frills. The contributors can't help but be aware that the stance of the concerned photographer is something of a long shot, at a time when the pseudo-documentary tricks of artists like Cindy Sherman and Jeff Wall have left most everybody feeling skeptical about the old seeing-is-believing approach.

Today's audiences will believe anything. They will also believe nothing. They have gone beyond caring about credibility, artistic or otherwise. What people care about now are the opinions that swirl around the work. It is important to point out that in recent years, when big controversies have raged around photographs, generally the sexually charged images of Robert Mapplethorpe, Jock Sturges, and others, the disputes haven't been about what we were seeing, but about where and under what circumstances and auspices it should or should not be seen. Mapplethorpe has been embraced, even by people who know that his work is something less than top-notch, under the general principle that when things that go on in museums garner this much attention, they are good for art in general. Yet the conundrum of photography in the museums and galleries is that its popularity seems to increase in direct proportion to its non-art or proto-art power. It has become increasingly clear in the decade since Mapplethorpe's name was bandied about on Capitol Hill that the effect of that national controversy has not been to empower photography as a medium that an artist can shape to a particular end, so much as to underscore photography's Rorschach-test impact, its tendency to be different things to different people, and artistic intentions be damned.

The art magazines, which now regularly devote special issues to photography, inform us that the medium has matured. Beth Gates-Warren, a private consultant who worked for Sotheby's, told *Artnews* that "it's a wiser market now." She is referring to investment potential, but of course it is in part landmarks like the Mapplethorpe flap that have created the buzz that makes investment attractive. Photography now has its record prices, its controversies and its scandals (including a growing market in forged vintage prints). Everything has been documented and every market niche has been filled, and yet in the midst of all this activity contemporary photographers look like pygmies, dwarfed by a boom that is the creation of everybody but the artists.

VI.

Photography is in deep trouble as it moves through the second half of its second century, and what is most troubling is that this most improvisatory of all the visual arts has lost its dreamily wayward soul. Perhaps a desire

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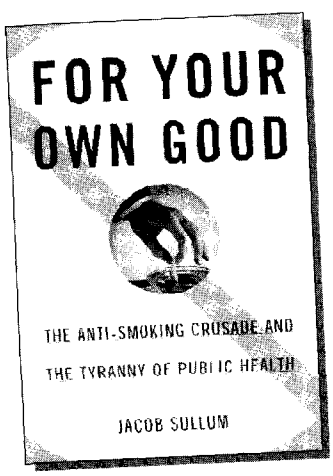

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to resurrect that lost innocence accounts for a lot of the woozily soft-focus work that we are seeing just now, although this could also signify a desire to draw a come-hither veil across the Mapplethorpe era. Of course, there are still individual photographers who come through with something that strikes a chord. I have not by and large been a fan of Nicholas Nixon's work, but I do think that the series of photographs that he did in 1990, of his young son and daughter, with the camera shoved close to them so that we have this overwhelming sense of kooky intimacy, is something really new. And some of Thomas Struth's work has an element of surprise. In his black-and-white views of empty city streets and his color impressions of crowded museum galleries, he brings a plainspoken photographic immediacy to big theoretical questions about the nature of public and private space.

Whatever valuable work there is being done cannot alter the overwhelming impression that photographers, who once epitomized a modern wanderlust, have become too self-conscious for their own good. Basically, they don't seem to know what to do with themselves. Some may regard such feelings of drift and confusion as the most *au courant* of art-world emotions, but I see a failure of nerve, and I believe that it is related to the medium's dramatically shifting relationship with the other visual arts. In the century and a half roughly from Romanticism to Abstract Expressionism, when all the old pictorial models were collapsing and the new ones were rising and most artists could be said to be living by their wits, photographers were right in the middle of the revolution, along with everybody else. Where you place photography today depends on what you think has happened to modern art in general. If you believe, as many do, that what the revolution ultimately did was to overturn the very idea of the artist as a unique imaginative being, then the inherent impersonality of photography is the logical conclusion of the modern movement, and all the photographic or quasi-photographic work that we are seeing is right where it should be, which is in the blue-chip galleries.

Photography is valued for its self-evident ability to zero in on the zeitgeist, but the big question right now is whether we want artists to be tuned into the zeitgeist at all. My answer is no. If there has been an encouraging development in the visual arts in the past couple of decades, it has been a turning away from the wide world—a realization that whereas it once seemed as if painting's and sculpture's most radical leaps were tied to history's evolutionary spiral, those very same developments now appear to be more deeply knit into the fabric of tradition than anybody ever dreamed. What painters and sculptors are reaching for in this mighty confusing time is not T.S. Eliot's impersonal vision of tradition; we have had too much impersonality already. What they are after is a hyper-personal view of tradition, a way of putting together past, present, and future that hinges on the artist's moment-by-moment experience in the studio.

The only place for artists to go is back into the studio, which is not just a place, but a complicated accretion of assumptions, conventions, practices, dreams, ideas. And where does that leave photographers? They have always lived out in the world, and their greatest achievements have been based on their excitement at venturing forth, tethered by few rules and less history. By now all the modern rules and modern histories have piled up around the photographers, as they have piled up around all the other artists. For painters and sculptors, the immensity of the past presents endless possibilities to regroup and reconnoiter, to prepare the next campaign. But photographers do not have those options. If there are no great photographers emerging today, this is probably because the photographers who know that it is time to retreat and rethink the medium have found that they literally have no place to go. •

The Flute of Modernity

BY AMIT CHAUDHURI

Rabindranath Tagore: An Anthology edited by Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson

(St. Martin's Press, 416 pp., $30)

Rabindranath Tagore: The Myriad-Minded Man by Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson

(St. Martin's Press, 493 pp., $35)

Rabindranath Tagore was born on May 7, 1861, or the 25th day of the month of Baisakh in the Bengali calendar. The 25th of Baisakh is still celebrated in Bengal, especially in Calcutta, with performances of Tagore's songs and dance-dramas, and the heat of midsummer is associated in the minds of Bengalis with Tagore's birthday. His name itself conjures up light and heat, for Rabindranath means "lord of the sun." For quite a few years, however, the celebrations have had the slightly exhausted air of ritual, a ritual by which Bengalis not only commemorate an anniversary but also observe the passing away of something more than Tagore, the passing of something that defined themselves and their own Bengaliness; though this is never articulated in so many words.

In 1778, roughly a century before Tagore's birth, an English scholar-administrator named Nathaniel Halhead wrote the first Bengali grammar, probably with the collaboration of Brahmin *pandits*. Calcutta was then the East India Company's main port of trade, and Bengal, of which Calcutta is the capital, was the province upon which the commercial and cultural exchange of the colonial world would leave its most profound impress. Halhead wrote the grammar for the instruction of English officials and administrators. Though the machinery of colonialism had already begun to whir after Mughal rule was deposed in Bengal in 1757, officials of the Company still behaved like traders in a foreign land, taking the trouble, for their own purposes, to comprehend the local language and customs.

William Jones arrived at Calcutta from Oxford in 1783. He had been an Arabist before, but now in Calcutta he unofficially inaugurated Orientalist scholarship, translating Sanskrit texts into English, most famously the works of Kalidasa, whom he touchingly and misleadingly called the "Shakespeare of the East." Kalidasa was the court poet in King Vikramaditya's court in the fifth century AD, and he became famous in nineteenth-century Europe, especially for his play *Sakuntala*, which Jones translated and Goethe admired. Kalidasa was also to become Tagore's favorite poet, and this, too, must surely owe something to the renewed attention directed to the

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long-dead poet by the Welshman, in one of the earliest in a series of cultural collaborations that characterized the formation of modern Indian culture.

An overarching narrative about the historical past was absent from the consciousness of Indians at the time; and the spiritual and political history of India reconstructed by Orientalist scholars in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries supplied, substantially, that narrative. By the 1830s, the young Anglo-Portuguese poet and teacher Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, who was born in Calcutta and identified himself as "Indian," had taken the presence of that golden past sufficiently as a given to mourn its passing in sonnets such as "To India—My Native Land," which is studied in schools even today. That sonnet was one of the first utterances of an incipient nationalism, a collective identity that had crossed over into the domain of the aesthetic; and Derozio's students at the Hindu College, Calcutta, members of India's newly-formed middle class, who would read Tom Paine and have their heads full of radical ideas, were among the first to articulate nationalist ideas.

Yet the recovery of history, for the Indian, was also fraught with ambiguity. History was like the subconscious; it had been buried, and now, in an act of translation, it was being recovered. It was as if Indians, in invoking history, were recalling a past that they did not remember having forgotten. Thus while Derozio is proprietary about the past, talking aloud about "our days of glory past," Tagore is ambivalent and full of doubt: like the subconscious, history, for the Indian, is both one's own and the Other. The awareness of it is accompanied not only by a sense of modernity and identity, but also by a sense of loss and imprisonment.

These paradoxes are played out in Tagore's poem "*Meghaduta*," or "The Cloud Messenger," which is about Kalidasa's great long poem of the same name. Kalidasa's Sanskrit poem is set in the rainy season, a season beloved of Tagore; it is an ode to nature and a record of romantic, metaphysical separation (*biraha*). The speaker in the poem asks the rain-carrying clouds to carry a message from him to his beloved in the faraway city of Alaka. And Tagore's poem about this poem is not only a characteristic celebration of the rains, it is also a celebration of the intellectual ambience of early colonial India.

Kalidasa had become world-famous in the early nineteenth century, well before Tagore's birth, with Jones's translation; and the scholar H.H. Wilson had

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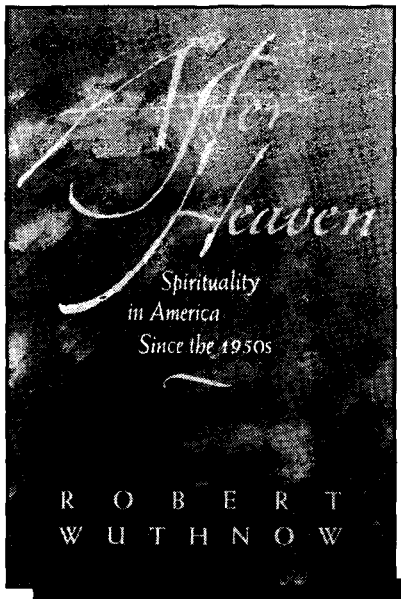

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translated the *Meghaduta* in 1813, a translation that was well known in educated, middle-class Bengali circles. By the time of Tagore's birth, Calcutta was not only a site of scholarship, it was also proliferating printing-presses in Bengali and English, and was later producing more books than almost anywhere else in the world except London. William Dune, the editor of a journal published from Calcutta called *The World* (a telling and ambitious name for a colonial journal, but indicative of the city's internationalist temperament), had observed in 1791 that "in splendour London now eclipses Rome ... and in similar respects, Calcutta rivals the head of the empire. But in no respect can she appear so eminently so, as in her publications ... we may place Calcutta in rank above Vienna, Copenhagen, Petersburg, Madrid, Venice, Turin, Naples or even Rome." It was inevitable, therefore, that Kalidasa would be present in the library of a cultured, cosmopolitan family such as the Tagores, which was itself instrumental in shaping that culture.

Tagore's poem is an implicit tribute to that intellectual ambience and the possibilities it created; and it is also a tribute to the secular, silent act of reading, which, in that culture, had become a significant activity whereby old texts, and the printed page, were placed in new contexts, and reassessed and reimagined. Tagore's poem is pervaded both by the sound of thunder (it is raining outside as he reads) and the inward silence of perusal:

Today is a dark day, the rain is incessant....

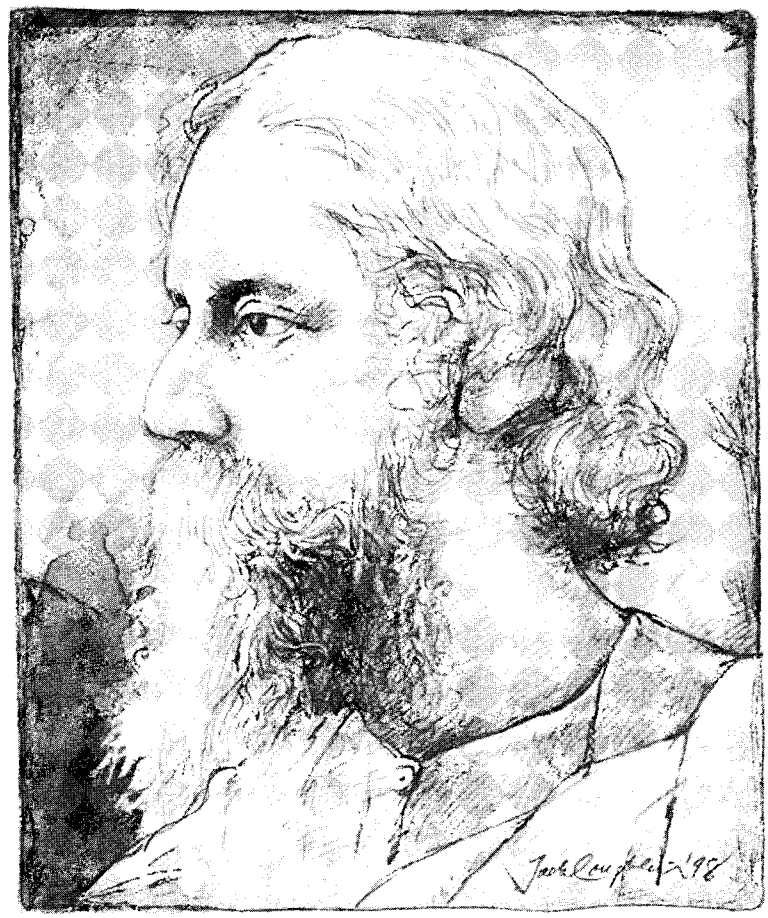
In a gloomy closed room I sit alone
And read the *Meghaduta*. My mind leaves the room,
Travels on a free-moving cloud, flies far and wide.
There is the Amrakuta mountain,
There is the clear and slender Reva river,
Tumbling over stones in the Vindhya foothills....

(translated by William Radice)

Yet recalling the past meant, for the Indian, confronting the question: why, and how, had he lost touch with it? As Tagore wrote, in an essay on Kalidasa: "Not merely a temporal but an eternal gulf seems to separate us from the great slice of ancient India—stretching from the Ramagiri to the Himalayas—through which life's stream flowed in the form of the *mandakranta* meter of the *Meghaduta*." In his poem, Tagore brilliantly reworks Kalidasa's tale of separation from the loved one into a narrative of the separation of the self from history; the beloved pining in the city of Alaka becomes a figure for the past, intimate but distant, beautiful, desired, but not quite recoverable. From the English Romantics Tagore had learned of the Imagination, and here he uses Kalidasa's cloud in a Wordsworthian way, making it a symbol for the modern Indian's desire to be one, through the Imagination, with his identity and his history:

My heart travels thus, like a cloud, from land to land
Until it floats at last into Alaka—Heavenly, longed-for city
Where pines that most loved of loves,
That paragon of beauty. Who but you, O poet,
Revealer of eternal worlds fit for Lakshmi to dally in,
Could take me there? To the woods of undying spring-flowers
Forever moonlit, to the golden-lotus-lake....
Through the open window she can be seen—
Wasted in body, lying on her bed like a sliver of moon
Sunk low in the eastern sky.
Poet, your spell has released
Tight bonds of pain in this heart of mine.
I too have entered that heaven of yearning
Where, amidst limitless beauties,
Alone and awake, that adored one spends her unending night.
The vision goes. I watch the rain again
Pouring steadily all around.

(translated by William Radice)



RABINDRANATH TAGORE BY JACK COUGHLIN FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

While Tagore wrote charming, implicitly patriotic verses, often for children, about the heroes and the heroines of precolonial India (there was a renewed focus on these figures among the Bengali intelligentsia, owing to influential Orientalist histories such as James Tod's *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han*), he was also the first poet to articulate the educated Indian's anxiety about the loss and the recovery of the past. In another poem, "Dream," Tagore invokes his sense of his historical past not nationalistically (as, say, Derozio would have invoked it), but in terms of fantasy, loss, and incommunicability:

A long, long way away
in a dream-world, in the city of Ujjain,
by River Shipra I once went to find
my first love
from a previous life of mine.

(translated by Ketaki Kushari Dyson)

And ten stanzas later:

I looked at her face,
tried to speak,
but found no words.
That language was lost to me....

"That language": the nineteenth century in India, and especially in Bengal, was a time of radical crossings-over in language, when languages were both lost and regained. Derozio and his circle of contemporaries and students at the

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Hindu College wrote in English, the language that was present at the inception of the Indian middle class and that would always, in one way or another, define its existence. Michael Madhushudan Datta, one of those who studied there after Derozio died, began his career as a poet who wrote in English, and whose ambition it was to be a canonical "English" poet. (He even converted to Christianity, possibly to expedite this process.) But later, in 1861, faced with failure, he wrote the first modern poem in Bengali, which was also, in a sense, a translation and a revision: *Meghnadabada Kabya*, an epic poem based on an episode and a character from the ancient Indian epic the *Ramayana*, written in blank verse as a gesture toward Milton, and using Milton's sympathy "for the Devil's party" to invert the epic.

A few years later, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, a Bengali magistrate who worked for the British, wrote the first Indian novel in English, *Rajmohan's Wife*, a brief, economical exploration of the Bengali family and domesticity. Partly from a feeling of nationalism, Chatterjee crossed over to Bengali, and embarked on the project of creating the first modern corpus of Bengali fiction, indeed Indian fiction. Once, Sanskrit and Persian had been the official and "high" languages, Brajbhasha a Northern and Eastern Indian literary language, and English, among the Bengali bourgeoisie, had briefly played its part.

With the adoption of English and the formation of a middle class, there came, paradoxically, the idea of writing in the mother tongue. Bengali, whose grammar had been written approximately a hundred years ago by Halhead, became a respectable language of self-expression for the Bengali bourgeoisie and its intellectuals. Thus began what is often called the Bengal Renaissance, one of the greatest cultural efflorescences of the modern age. Tagore was at once its product, its spokesman, its inquisitor.

Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson have produced a very readable and generally sympathetic biography of Tagore. Dutta and Robinson wish to give us Tagore in his time, his public persona, and so they tend to put him in the company of other world figures of his day, such as Gandhi and Einstein; though it must be said that they do a good job of rendering also the inward complexity, the self-contradictoriness, and the insecurity of the man. What is most missing from this life of the poet is the poetry. This is partly because the authors have set out to avoid the gauzy, reverential literary effusions of earlier biographers. And yet a biography that

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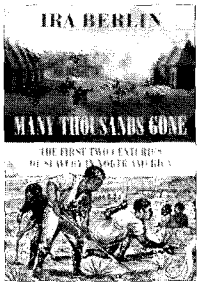

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takes the poetry into account with knowledge and sensitivity is absolutely essential. (Almost the only thing of this sort in English is the great Bengali poet and critic Buddhadeva Bose's elegant monograph on the poet, now available only on a few dusty library shelves.)

Dutta and Robinson do provide an interesting, and sometimes penetrating, account of Tagore's ancestry and his family. The Tagores were Brahmins; they apparently moved to Bengal around 1000 AD. Yet they came to exist at one remove from their caste, for members of a section of the family converted to Islam in the seventeenth century, and they were ostracized for it. Ostracism probably pushed the Tagores away from a more conventional Brahminical lifestyle toward entrepreneurship. They became successful middlemen, and were among the first to benefit substantially from trade with the British.

In the eighteenth century there was a rift within the family, and this led to the departure of Nilmoni Tagore, Tagore's great-great-grandfather, from the family home at Pathuriaghat and to his arrival at Calcutta, where he would build, in Jorasanko, the mansion in which Tagore would be born three-quarters of a century later. "From then on," Dutta and Robinson write, "especially during the high noon of Empire in India after 1857, the two branches of the Tagores at Pathuriaghat and Jorasanko would have little to do with each other." This small history of migration, ostracism, and fracture is important, for it allegorizes the split, gradual but irrevocable, between the old Bengal, and the old India, and the new; and it helps us to comprehend the independent-mindedness of Tagore's immediate family, and in what way it had been prepared, by the time of Tagore's birth, to contribute to an emergent India.

The contrast between Tagore's father and his grandfather is obvious. Tagore's grandfather, "Prince" Dwarkanath Tagore, was one of the first great Bengali entrepreneurs (a gradually disappearing breed, since business acumen came to be looked down upon in bourgeois Bengal). He was famous for his dinner parties in London; Dickens wrote about him. When he died, he left his son Debendranath his lands and his debts. Debendranath was a Platonic figure, and could have been one of the philosopher-aristocrats of the *Republic*: a man both this-worldly and other-worldly. Probably sometime in 1838, he experienced an epiphany after reading, by chance, a page of the *Upanishads*. He became a member of the Brahmo Samaj in 1843, a Hindu reform movement that owed something to Protestant Christianity; for it turned away from what it perceived to be the polytheism of middle and late Hinduism to the philosophical monotheism of the early Hindu texts, the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*. The gods and goddesses were replaced by a *nirakaar* force, a spiritual meaning without form or name.

The Brahmo Samaj went on to become one of the most powerful intellectual movements to shape modern, secular India. Indeed, secular India was prefigured by its basic tenets. In place of a varied, polyphonic, amorphous heterogeneity, there was now a unifying, all-encompassing meaning that was capable of accommodating and subsuming what it had replaced; and if this was the Brahmo Samaj's reworking of the Hindu religion, it was also Nehru's concept of what India as a nation-state should be. It is no wonder that the bases of the Brahmo Samaj seem to lead so logically to those of secular, Nehruvian India.

Debendranath's Brahmoism was a great influence on his son, though Tagore was never altogether comfortable with it. Tagore's poetry, especially his songs, are among the first and the most profound utterances of a secular Indian sensibility; they speak of an old world that is lost but is being transformed into something new. Here are the first two lines of a song:

> I haven't seen him with my eyes as yet.
> I have only heard a flute playing.

A couple of clarifications need to be made about the translation of those lines, which is my own. First, my first line has the pronoun "him" in place of the indeterminate Bengali *taare*; the Bengali pronoun never specifies gender, but derives it through context. Second, I have deliberately translated the second line literally. The Bengali reader or listener would automatically interpret Tagore to be saying "his flute"; yet the exact literal meaning suggests only "a flute" or "the flute." And both these points, small as they are, are pertinent to our understanding of the Brahmo-influenced, secular spirituality of Tagore's poetry, the leap he is making, very subtly, from the old world to the new.

In a traditional devotional song, the flute would be played by Krishna, the Hindu cowherd-god. In Tagore's song, the player is not named, and the indeterminate Bengali pronoun is apposite to the nameless, secular meanings of modern India that have replaced the hallowed, familiar names and significances. The old world has become invisible and cannot be seen "with my eyes"; what remains is the auditory signal that the flute sends forth. And by not using a possessive pronoun, by saying "flute" instead of "his flute," Tagore causes another fracture, a small disjunction, to occur. The sound of the flute represents the seductive appeal of Hindu divinity; it represents the known and the yearned-for. But the flute cut off from its original context becomes a more ambiguous sign; it represents what is unknown, new, transformed. The listeners of the song traverse a distance as they hear these two lines, and it is the distance between the old feudal faith and the psychological terrain of modern India.

Growing up in the great house in Jorasanko, Tagore would have experienced the stirrings of the new cosmopolitanism around him, and sensed them, indeed, in the presence of his own family. Here Dutta and Robinson's biography is useful and involving. There was Tagore's father, of course; but there was also his older brother Dwijendranath, who, according to the biographers, "was the most intellectual and the least worldly of the siblings. Deeply immersed in the study of Indian philosophy, mathematics and geometry, he also reveled in folding complex paper boxes and was responsible for inventing the first Bengali shorthand and musical notations." Another brother, Satyendranath, was the first Indian to enter the Indian Civil Service. And the most remarkable of Tagore's elder brothers was probably Jyotirindranath, who, among other things, composed his own songs on the piano.

Tagore was the youngest of thirteen children, and he grew up in that house with something of the solitariness and the freedom of an only child. There are whole pages in his memoirs, *Jiban Smriti*, or *My Reminiscences*, which appeared in 1911, devoted to meticulous descriptions of the hours that he spent daydreaming as a boy. He was a recalcitrant pupil, he hated school, and much of his education took place at home. The English language was especially hated, but it was compulsory; Tagore's account of himself as a boy hoping, on a rainy day, that his English tutor would fail to turn up, and his deep unhappiness, a few minutes later, upon seeing the tutor's black umbrella approaching stubbornly through the rain, is a classic of Bengali children's literature.

Meanwhile, Tagore's father would be away for long spells, either overseeing his lands, or doing the opposite, withdrawing from his worldly duties to some Himalayan resort in the North for a period of sustained meditation. His often-unannounced returns home

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created consternation, joy, and a tumult in the household; and these seemingly far-off tremors were also felt by the family's youngest member. Indeed, Tagore's relations with his parents are more mysterious than they at first might appear to be.

His mother is a figure largely in the background; she enters his poetry as a generalized maternal presence. The father's incarnation in his son's imaginative writings is more intriguing. Debendranath's mixture of aristocratic power and renunciatory spirituality, and his relative inaccessibility, seem to have made him, in Tagore's poems, a natural emblem for a certain kind of divinity that was spiritual and non-materialistic, masculine and powerful. Both the power of the old aristocracy and the reformist spiritualism of the Brahmo Samaj—contraries that were brought together in Debendranath—are integral to Tagore's idea of divinity in many of his poems. It is no accident that the divine being is called "Raja," or "king," in the poetry.

A poem called "Arrival," for instance, seems to recall those sudden returns home by Debendranath:

> Our work was over for the day, and now
> the light was fading;
> We did not think that anyone would come
> before the morning.
> All the houses round about
> Dark and shuttered for the night
> One or two amongst us said, "The King of
> Night is coming."
> We just laughed at them and said, "No one
> will come till morning."
>
> (translated by William Radice)

But later:

> O where are the lights, the garlands,
> where are the signs of celebration?
> Where is the throne? The King has come,
> we made no preparation!
> Alas what shame, what destiny,
> No court, no robes, no finery
> Somebody cried in our ears, "O vain,
> O vain this lamentation":
> With empty hands, in barren rooms,
> offer your celebration.

These stanzas, in Bengali, not only convey the physical upheaval Debendranath's return caused in the household of Jorasanko; they imply, too, the complex, dazzling paradox that the appearance of a figure such as Debendranath—aristocratic but unworldly, a "King" but "of Night"—signified on the horizon of Bengali culture. His appearance caused not only a tumult, but also a reordering of values, and an anxiety, in the household. His presence provoked questions.

Tagore's first memorable literary endeavor was accomplished when he was probably sixteen, in the shape of a literary fraud. Pessoa-like, the young Tagore

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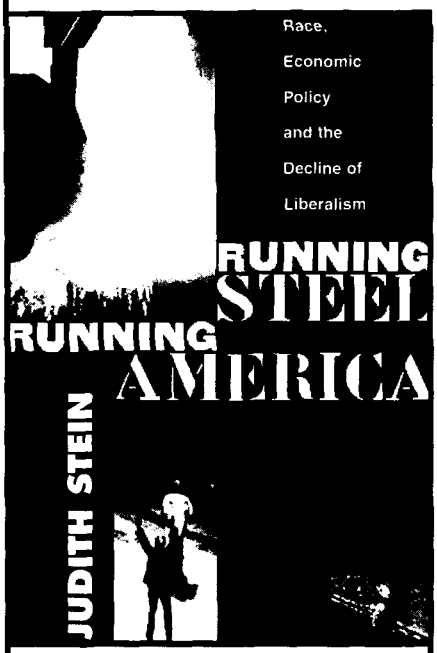

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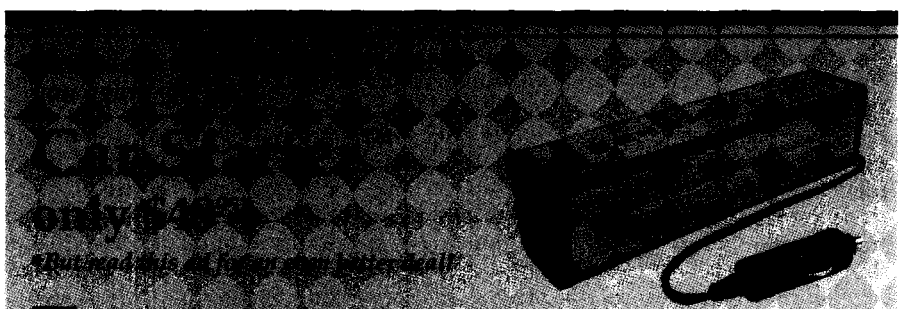

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created a "heteronym," Bhanusingha, a medieval poet who wrote in Brajabali, one of the older literary languages; and Bhanusingha's oeuvre of songs are sung today as part of the Tagore repertoire. Years later, in his memoirs, Tagore was still gleeful that these songs had deceived an authority on Bengali literature, who would later mention Bhanusingha in a thesis on medieval Bengali poetry.

The literary models and inspirations behind Tagore's imaginative leap are interesting in themselves, and they remind us of the hybrid context of Tagore's work and, indeed, of the Bengal Renaissance. This is worth pointing out, because cultural commentators today lazily identify post-colonial uses of English with hybridity and the indigenous languages of once-colonized countries with some sort of authenticity. Yet more than one language is written into Tagore's poetry.

Around the time that Tagore composed the *Bhanusingher Padabali*, Bengal was in the midst of unprecedented intellectual activity. Bengali scholars had recently collated the works of the great medieval Bengali poets, Chandidas and Bidyapati, and compiled the *Vaishnav Padabali*. It was the music of these poets with which the young Tagore fell in love, and he was moved to produce a comparable music through the persona of Bhanusingha. Yet the idea for the pastiche (if that is what it was) came from Chatterton, whose work Tagore also loved. Tagore's heteronym leads us to a moment of transition in the development of an artist and a culture. It is evidence of the pressure exerted upon him by his polyphonic, multilingual reality.

Tagore began his career in print as a lyric poet in the strictest sense: he was a writer of songs. His first book of poems, *Prabhat Sangeet*, or *Morning Songs*, was published in 1878, when he was seventeen. The core of his achievement may lie in his songs; and for these he was both admired and, at first, reviled by his contemporaries. It was for his own inexact prose version of another book of songs, the *Gitanjali* (a compilation, in the English version, of songs from the original collection and two others), that Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize many years later.

The story of his rise to international celebrity and the Nobel Prize is well known: Tagore completing his English "translations" (they were really reworkings) on board a ship to England in 1912; the painter Rothenstein reading the handwritten "translations" and, stunned, passing them on to Yeats; the excitement thereafter; Yeats introducing Tagore to an elite circle of friends in London, including Pound, who would confess to feeling like a "painted pict with a stone war-club" when he met the poet; publication of some of the prose-poems in Harriet Monroe's *Poetry* on Pound's recommendation; the Nobel Prize in 1913; Pound's and Yeats's swift and shocking disenchantment with Tagore; Tagore's ascension as a world figure from the "East" coinciding with his banishment from the serious Western literary establishment. A part of this story is given in Dutta and Robinson's anthology of Tagore's writings, in intermittent epistolary form, beginning with Tagore's letter to Yeats in 1912: "It has been such a great joy to me to think that things that I wrote in a tongue not known to you should at last fall in your hands and that you should accept them with so much enjoyment and love."

Few poets have led, in the modern age, so public a life, have lectured and spoken on so many subjects, occasionally badly and verbosely. And few poets in the modern age have mastered and left their mark on so many other genres: on musical composition, on the novella, and on the short story (the writer Buddhadeva Bose pointed out that Tagore brought the modern short story to Bengal at a time when it had hardly any practitioners in England), not to speak of the novel, the theater, and even painting.

In their anthology, Dutta and Robinson have attempted to give the reader a sense of this range, though it doesn't seem that the quality of the translations of much of the poetry (I have in mind especially Tagore's own problematic "reworkings") will do much to alter Tagore's reputation outside Bengal, or to extend his readership beyond what has long been his constituency in the West: Indophiles, amateur religious enthusiasts, and admirers of Kahlil Gibran. I say this despite the fact that Dutta and Robinson have bravely tried to make Tagore real, and historical, by including some of his letters, his lesser-known essays, and some of the marvelous early letters written in Shelidah, when Tagore was looking after his father's estates and was still young and obscure. In those letters he recorded, in casual but heightened prose, the life of the estates, the local people who worked on or around them, the weather, and the faint traces of the colonial world: from these experiences would come the first short stories, full of air and light, bringing the ordinary Indian citizen of the colonial world—a postmaster, a servant girl—into Indian fiction for the first time.

For all this, one still feels that it is time that Tagore's most recent translators settle their differences, and bring out a volume of their own best translations of Tagore's poems and stories; for there have been good translations by each of them, a fact that tends to get lost with each new attempt, as well each translator's implicit assumption that his or her Tagore is the "true" one.

Few poets, then, have been so prolific and in so many ways, and, also, in their lifetime, have been so written about and spoken about. Yet it is crucial to note that few poets in their work—in the output on which both their popular and critical reputations rest—have devoted so much of their gift to describing what is half-understood, partially grasped, unclear, or ambiguous—but that is the temperament of Tagore's songs and his lyricism. This is ironic, of course. In the West, and sometimes in India, Tagore has traditionally been seen as a purveyor of Eastern wisdom, a man who tended to make recondite, timeless utterances. He himself, when not composing poetry, wrote repeatedly of "creative unity" and "universalism." Yet his Bengali lyrics have everything to do with uncertainty, with hesitation, with the fleeting and the momentary, and the beauty that resides in the moment of incomplete perception.

How did a lyric poet, rather than an epic poet, come to be Bengal's national poet? And a poet of uncertainties and absences, which makes him an unusual national poet, to say the least. The reason for this is probably that Bengal was the site of India's first modern middle-class culture, a culture neither feudal nor entrepreneurial. Unlike other Indian cultures, with ancient feudal and religious traditions, Bengal—though it possessed its own rich stream of pre-colonial culture—found its most characteristic voice in the late nineteenth century, in its bourgeoisie. Modern Bengal began, no doubt, with an entrepreneurial flourish, with the likes of Tagore's grandfather Dwarkanath Tagore; but in Tagore's family itself, the gradual distancing, over the next two generations, of the world of business activity from the world of "cultured" or *bhadra* society becomes apparent. More and more, ambitions related to commerce would come to be looked down upon.

Both old feudal societies, with their internalized religious and mythic landscapes, and new entrepreneurial societies, with their external upheavals, need epic poets. Thus the ancient poetry of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* sustained the feudal Indian consciousness until the nineteenth century, and does

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so even now. Yet the genteel Bengali middle class—the *bhadralok*, literally, the "civil person" or "civilized person"—chose for its national poet one who sang of the small incommunicabilities of human language. Occupying a perpetual in-between space in history, that middle class, which no longer possessed the language to speak of the past that had vanished or of the world that had opened up before it, found in this poet's metaphors a vocabulary of self-definition. Thus, both *diganta*, or "horizon," which suggests that opening-up, and *katha*, or "word," "language," or "story," suggesting self-expression and history, recur in Tagore's songs.

The Bengali middle class consisted of barristers, advocates, schoolteachers, lecturers, doctors, civil servants, people who were both partaking of colonial power and revising its meaning. They constituted the first indigenous governing class in India who experienced power while being cut off from its source. Theirs was a jealously protected world, composed of known and concrete social and secular values: the family; the child; education; respectability; marriage; entry (for males and, gradually and less commonly, for women) into one of the professions. The unknown, for them, was the glimmer of the past, all that their small but all-encompassing world had replaced; the past, and their own buried selves.

Tagore's poetry, especially in his songs, captures this psychological dichotomy with precision. The Bengali bourgeois world of the social, the worldly, the known, becomes in his songs the concrete and physical world of sensation and appearance, of detail; the buried self becomes a passer-by or traveler—a *pathik*, seldom met or seen—or a guest—*atithi*—awaited by someone who stands at a window. These are Tagore's recurring motifs.

One can see this duality inform the opening lines of a song chosen at random, though it is a famous song (the translation is mine):

> O moment's guest,
> whom did you come searching for at dawn
> climbing a path strewn with *shefali*
> blossoms?

The acts of noticing and compression are enshrined in the third line. A Bengali would know that the white, star-shaped *shefali* flowers, redolent with perfume in the evening, fall from their branches in the course of the night, so that the feet of a person trampling on them at dawn would be the first things to disturb them from their repose, the first human influence of the day to agitate nature; and the unseen traveler, ghostlike, would leave no sign of his passing except the disturbance of the dead *shefali* flowers. The line is as abbreviated a statement as a line in a haiku; the detail is as oblique as the one in Edward Thomas's "In Memoriam (Easter 1915)," where the presence of the war is suggested in terms of the bushes heavy with flowers, because the men who would pick those flowers for their sweethearts are all away.

The physical world, then, is evoked concretely; but the traveler, the stranger, is blurred and indefinite. And he, being a "guest," reminds us of both what is ours and not ours. It is as if the poem's speaker at once longs to be hospitable to, and is distanced from, his innermost self. This—the tensions between the physical, the familiar, the minute, and the unclear and potentially distant—perfectly captures and dramatizes the psychological dichotomy of the Bengali bourgeoisie, the dichotomy, in the middle-class psyche, between the social-secular-rational-colonial world and the world of the subconscious and the precolonial.

Again and again in Tagore's songs, the secular world perceives the glimmer of the known or the partially known—the complex religious and feudal world that has vanished, with the self that belonged there—either through a window or while confronting the horizon (which transforms the landscape into a great window). The word *kichhu*, which as an adjective means "a little," and as a noun "something" or "anything," is a common enough word in the language. Tagore makes it a key-word in his songs, using it repeatedly to define the half-understood "something" that exists on the edges of the secular world. It is a euphemism for history and the subconscious. Tagore also uses it to mean "something unsaid"; and here, too, a complex emotional register is created, for it evokes the poignancy of the trajectory of Bengali middle-class life, with its *bhadralok* propriety, gentility, rationality, and its ironic lack of fulfillment. Here are the first lines of another song; I have italicized the words that are translations of *kichhu*:

> You may as well sit by me for a *little* while more;
> If you have *anything* more to say, say it, whatever it is.
> See, the autumn sky pales.
> The vaporous air makes the horizon shine.

The imperfectly perceived, partially known, unnamed presence—whether it represents the spiritual source of the precolonial world now made semivisible

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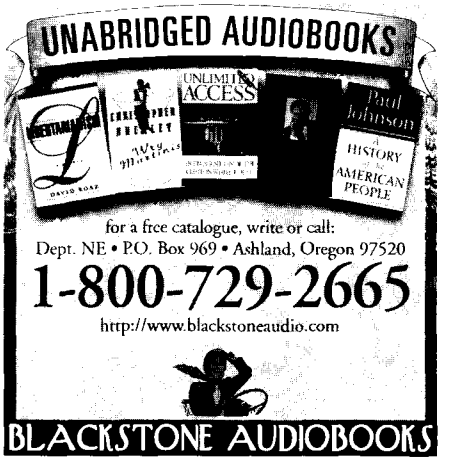

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and nameless, or the regeneration of the new one—is always associated, in Tagore's songs, with conflicting emotions of resignation and joy: resignation, because that spirituality is inaccessible now except through these spots of time; and joy, because these spots of time open up new possibilities, new ways of deriving sustenance from the old. Thus, songs such as "From time to time I catch glimpses of you" and "Because I wish to find you anew / I lose you moment to moment" are accompanied by conflicting impulses of acceptance and excitement in the interpreter of the song and its listener; they capture the sense of incomplete but revivifying spiritual possibility in the interstitial world of the Bengali, and the Indian, middle class.

Indirectness, in these songs, is both Tagore's literary mode and his subject matter. This indirectness, this articulate evasiveness, was also reflected in the life of the Bengali middle class before, and to a certain degree after, independence. It has been the source of much that is modern about modern India; but it has also been traditionally cut off, and sometimes it has cut itself off, from central political power. It is at least partly for this reason—Bengal's distance from direct political control in the colonial age and even the postcolonial age—that epic sweep and candor, in the poetry of Bengal's national poet, have been replaced by lyric suggestion and reticence. At crucial junctures of nationhood, poets narrate and recreate their nation's history in the form of epic; but Bengal was both a nation and not a nation, a region with its own community and history but also a part of the larger nation-state that had been conceptualized, early on, by its own intellectuals. Thus Tagore's most enduring creative legacy to the Bengali bourgeoisie was both epic-like and yet not an epic, a gift of songs in which the consciousness of Bengali modernity first found utterance and in which the impress of its creation and history was subliminally contained, while relinquishing the overarching narrative of the epic for lyric moments of implication and inquiry.

The problem with reading and judging Tagore is not only a problem of translation, or of understanding a seemingly untranslatable and exotic culture. Tagore needs to placed in the context of modern Indian history, and more specifically in the context of Bengali middle-class culture, before his work can be understood, and the same holds true the other way round. But alas, India is commonly perceived as either possessing no history at all, as being an enchanted place of ancient myths and verities (thus the jacket of Dutta and Robinson's anthology of Tagore's writings promises that it is an "essential guide for readers seeking ... wisdom"); or else its history is seen in an entirely reactive way, as a parable of postcoloniality, of the confrontation of the colonized with the colonizer. But Tagore does not fit into either formulation, and neither does most of modern India. Tagore is one of the figures who stands at the forefront of India's extraordinary and often traumatic reinterpretation of itself in this century. And his most profound engagement with history lay not in his asides to Gandhi or his opinions on Mussolini, but in the reticent, self-repeating, half-lit world of his poems and his songs.

AMIT CHAUDHURI's *Freedom Song: Three Novels* will be published in the spring by Knopf.

The First Russian

BY RICHARD PIPES

Russia in the Age of Peter the Great by Lindsey Hughes

(Yale University Press, 602 pp., $35)

Peter I was the grandest of Russia's rulers and one of the most extraordinary figures in world history. His inexhaustible energy and insatiable curiosity, his autocratic will that brooked no opposition combined with personal modesty and the willingness to treat himself as an ordinary servant of the state, his ability to learn from his mistakes, and above all his determination to remake Russia, the largest country in the world, on the foreign model, inspire as much awe in posterity as they did among his contemporaries. To say this, of course, is not to offer a judgment of his achievement, but only to suggest its magnitude.

Peter, who ascended the throne in 1689, is the first Russian monarch—indeed, the first Russian—with an identifiable personality, for his predecessors were icons, conforming to the Oriental custom of treating kings as divine creatures devoid of ordinary human traits. He and his widowed mother were exiled by a rival clan to the suburbs of Moscow, where Peter grew up with little supervision and in constant contact with foreigners living in the so-called "German settlement." Since he spent little of his youth in the stifling atmosphere of the Kremlin, he developed early a pronounced individuality; and thanks to his frequent encounters with foreigners, we possess numerous descriptions of him. Thus the Princess of Hanover, whose court he visited en route to Holland in 1697, and to whom he bragged, displaying his callused hands, that he had mastered fourteen trades, spoke of him as a talented young man, rather uncouth, who needed a good education. Peter emerges as a savage yearning for culture as the key to power.

Much of the fascination with Peter derived—and still derives—from the belief that he transformed a "rude and barbarous kingdom" into a modern state, that he literally "made" Russia. In 1721, upon the conclusion of the Treaty of Nystadt with Sweden which brought to an end a 21-year war and assured Russia of a dominant position in eastern Europe, Chancellor Gavrila Golovkin declared that Peter had transformed Russia "from non-existence into existence." A similar judgment was expressed by Voltaire, who wrote in his *History of the Russian Empire under Peter the Great*, a work commissioned and paid for by Peter's daughter, Empress Elizabeth, that "[the Russians] possessed the vastest realm in the universe and everything here had to be done. Finally, Peter was born and Russia was formed."

His enemies as well as his admirers viewed Peter as a sudden apparition. The Old Believers—Orthodox Christians who rejected the changes in church ritual introduced in the seventeenth century—saw him as Antichrist. Princess Ekaterina Dashkova, a companion of Catherine the Great and the author of important memoirs, called Peter a "military despot," and castigated him for invoking foreign help, for being poorly educated, cruel, and coarse, and for treating his subjects as slaves. And in the view of the nationalist Slavophiles of the next century, Peter bore responsibility for a disastrous bifurcation of Russian

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culture that separated the upper and lower classes and alienated the mass of ordinary people from their rulers.

Modern historians, committed as they are to the principle of continuity, have tended to minimize the revolutionary nature of Petrine reforms by stressing their antecedents. Still, to this day, one's attitude to Peter remains a litmus test of a Russian's politics. Those who favor Westernization praise him, whereas those who wish Russia to take its own, separate path condemn him. He remains, as he has always been, the most controversial figure in the country's history.

There is no dearth of histories of Peter's reign. The standard work on the subject, R. Wittram's two-volume *Peter I: Czar und Kaiser*, published in 1964, is available only in German. In English there is the relevant volume in V.O. Kliuchevskii's classic university course on Russian history, as well as monographs by M.S. Anderson, R.K. Massie, and Humphrey Sumner. Especially noteworthy is the recent work by the Russian historian E.V. Anisimov, published in English translation in 1993 under the title *The Reforms of Peter the Great: Progress through Coercion*, which finds antecedents of communist totalitarianism in the Petrine regime.

Lindsey Hughes, professor of Russian history at the University of London and the author of a biography of Peter's ambitious half-sister Sophia, has produced the most comprehensive study of Petrine Russia available in English. The book is based on extensive research in primary and secondary sources, including the still unpublished materials for the documentary series of volumes *Letters and Papers of Peter the Great* held in a Russian archive. Suffice it to say that the endnotes and the bibliography occupy one-fifth of the text. Unfortunately Hughes does not always list in the bibliography the works that she cites in the endnotes, which makes it occasionally difficult to verify her references.

If comprehensiveness is the book's strength, the absence of an overall conception is its weakness. Rather than advance her own interpretation of Peter's reign or accept one of the existing interpretations, Hughes summarizes—reliably and objectively—the full spectrum of scholarly opinion, leaving the reader to make up his mind. This procedure, in the case of a ruler as controversial as Peter the Great, is not quite satisfactory. The avoidance of judgment is a widespread flaw of contemporary academic historiography in its quest for the prestige of "value-free" natural science.

Hughes's book opens, rather surprisingly, with a survey of Russia's foreign

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

AJC has issued two comprehensive accounts of how China and Russia are aiding Iran in the development of unconventional weapons. **Silkworms and Summitry: Chinese Arms Exports to Iran and U.S.-China Relations** ($2.50 per copy), by Bates Gill, has been called "one of the finest pieces of analysis that I have ever seen" by Rep. Howard Berman (CA). **The Russian Connection: Russia, Iran, and the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction** ($2.00 per copy), by Scott Parrish, was lauded on the floor of the Senate by Sen. Joseph Biden (DE). The authors of both publications are associated with the Monterey Institute of International Studies.

AJC is also launching a new series, **The Central and East European Curriculum Project**, which focuses on the countries that have recently emerged from communist rule. This series looks at what the public schools of these countries teach about Judaism, Jewish history, the Holocaust, and Israel, and they are written by experts familiar with the local situation. Each publication is issued both in an English version and in the language of the particular country. The first two studies have just been issued: **The Treatment of Jewish Themes in Polish Schools** ($5.00 per copy), by Hanna Wegrzynek, and **The Treatment of Jewish Themes in Czech Schools** ($5.00 per copy), by Leo Pavlat.

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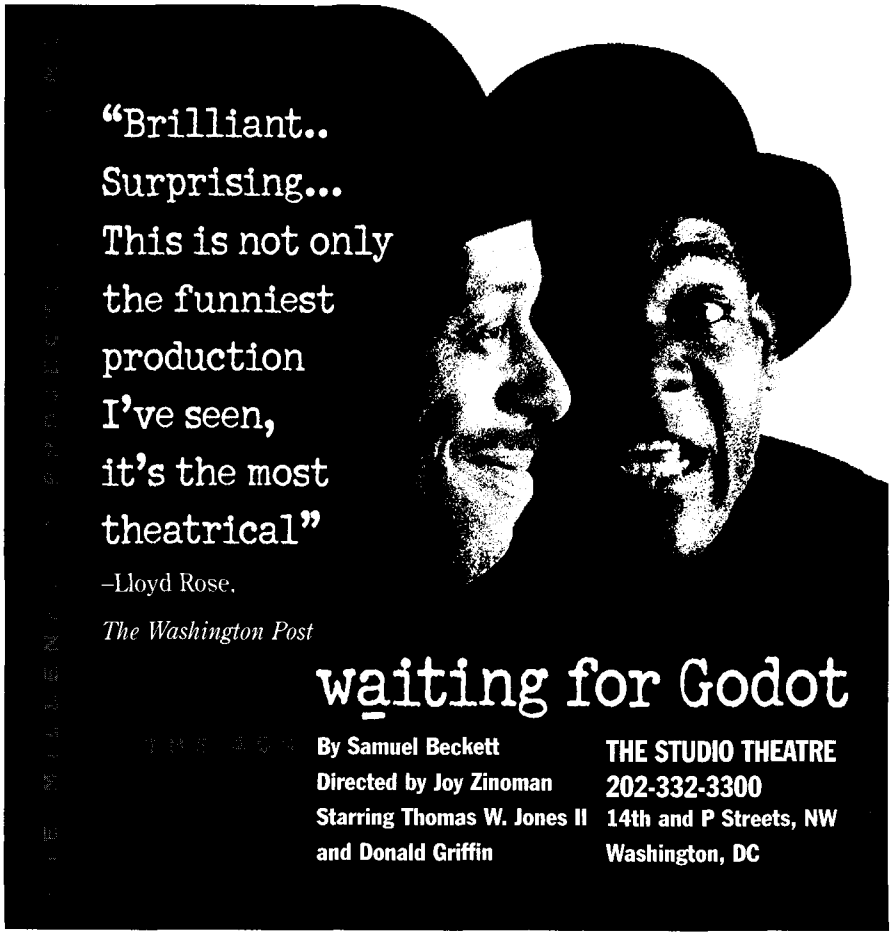
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policy and military history under Peter. She adopts this organization because she embraces Kliuchevskii's thesis that all the reforms of Peter—political, economic, social, cultural—were driven by military exigencies and the desire to make Russia a great European power. This approach strikes me as convincing, even if it is not universally shared. Hughes then proceeds to describe Russia's government and economy, the social classes and the cultural developments, concluding with a depiction of the man and the people with whom he surrounded himself. The facts are rendered accurately though somewhat indiscriminately, as if every fact were of equal importance. Such contentious issues as the status of serfs and the effects of Westernization are handled sensibly.

The book ends with a brief section called "The Legacy," which summarizes the various verdicts on Peter but gives no preference to any of them. Again, Hughes arrives at no conclusion of her own. This is a pity, because the Petrine heritage is of great importance both for Russia's past and future.

In my own judgment, Peter's reign had, on the whole, a deleterious effect on Russia's evolution, and for two reasons.

The first is that Peter's rule inculcated in its elite the notion that Russia has a God-given claim to being a Great Power. Russia, indeed, has an immense territory (most of it uninhabited and uninhabitable), and it occupies a unique location on the globe, bordering on three of the world's geopolitical regions: Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia. These accidents of geography certainly create opportunities for great-power politics—but they do not, of themselves, make Russia a great power.

To attain that station, a state needs commensurate economic foundations, which Russia has never managed to acquire. Its main asset is its natural resources, but they require large investments to extract and to transport. A good part of the necessary capital came (and continues to come) from abroad. As for agriculture, the traditional mainstay of the economy, it was and remains one of the most backward in Europe, owing to climatic conditions and the quality of the soil (in Russia proper).

Contrary to the widespread opinion that Russia is potentially another America, it is in fact a poor country; far too poor to carry the burden of playing at great-power politics. The upkeep of a large standing army—Peter's innovation—and the other branches of the military, which have enabled Russia to participate in international affairs since his day, has absorbed so much of its meager financial resources that there was little left to build up the economic infrastructure, which is what really counts. It also has caused the notorious corruption and arbitrariness of its officialdom, whom the government has never been able to pay adequately and hence had no choice but to allow to live off the country. The striving to gain for Russia the status of a world power by force of arms is one of the worst legacies of Peter. It continues to cause harm to this day.

The other harmful heritage of Peter was the forced Westernization of the elite. The Russia of Peter's youth was incredibly backward. As Hughes writes,

> ... not only did Muscovy lack universities or academies, but for most of the seventeenth century it also lacked schools. In the world of books and publishing, the statistics are equally bleak. In the whole of the seventeenth century the single, Church-run press in Moscow published fewer than ten books which were not wholly religious in content....

To make matters worse, pre-Petrine Russia identified learning with apostasy and gloried in its ignorance.

Bishop Berkeley

Maybe the material world would have seemed to him
Real enough, his doubts mostly illusion,
If his boyhood had been less bookish.
It's doubtful, if he'd grown up on a farm,
That a glass of milk left on his desk by a servant
To help him ease into sleep would have seemed no more
Than a prop in a play, that the wall of books behind it
Would have looked like a painted backdrop.
The glass would have recalled his milking days,
The boy in the barn with Madge, the Guernsey.
Few arguments then could have convinced him
That he merely dreamed the warmth of her fur,
The ripe barn smell, the weight of the pail
As he carried it, waving the flies away, to the kitchen.
Then the Bishop might have turned his philosophy
To questions a farmer might ask on Sunday evening
Like the deepest difference between the perspective of cows
And that of the man who keeps the herd.
Is it their failure to guess the fate that awaits them
While we, intent on the truth, guess ours,
Or do they know something unknown to us
That keeps them quiet and uncomplaining,
Free of the wish for triumph or travel? Even today
A farmer might read that chapter with profit
Before he turns to wonder why his wife's awakened
Each morning for three weeks running with a dream of Prague,
The city she left with her family when she was five.
Why have those buried images shaken loose
From the bottom of the pond just now, after thirty years,
And floated up till the woman won't rest
Till she compares the city she still recalls
To the one that's bound to be disappointing.
On the outskirts of Prague, in a budget motel,
The farmer lies beside her listening to the road noise.
It's too far to glimpse the roof of his barn,
Which the Bishop doesn't think solid anyway,
But he can almost hear, when the traffic slows,
The sound of the cows crossing the gravel path,
And then their softer steps on the grass of the pasture,
And then their stillness as they bend to browse.

CARL DENNIS

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Peter's assault on the smug illiteracy of his people had understandable and commendable motives. Yet the brutal methods that he used to implant learning on his native soil were counterproductive. Peter tore ten-year-old boys from their families and subjected them to forced education far from home. Many teenagers were sent to study navigation and other sciences abroad, where they languished in loneliness. Male members of the nobility could not marry without providing proof of literacy and proficiency in algebra and geometry.

In this manner, a small Western-educated class was created by government fiat and coercion. It became, as a result, an alienated group that lost a common language with the vast majority of the country's inhabitants, and hence the capability of providing it with leadership. The social revolution that broke out spontaneously in 1917, the one that the Bolsheviks fanned, quickly turned also into a cultural revolution, which ended in the emigration or extermination of the bulk of the country's educated class. Russia still has to recover from this debacle.

Was there another way to civilize Russia? I think so. The model was provided by the Ukrainians, who after several centuries of exposure to, and competition with, the Catholic West arrived at a synthesis of Western and Eastern cultures that could have been transplanted to Russia proper. Through direct contacts with Catholic Poland and Rome, Ukrainian intellectuals—virtually all of them clergymen—came to understand the spirit of Western culture, whereas Peter grasped only its power-enhancing by-products. Peter drew on Kievan intellectuals for his own purposes, but he was too impatient and too narrowly focused on technology to follow the Ukrainian path.

In these and in other respects, Peter aggrandized the role of the state and thwarted the development of society. Much of the deformed development of Russia in the past three centuries can be attributed to this cause.

Post-communist Russia has once again elevated Peter to the rank of a national hero. As soon as communism fell, the citizens of the city that he had founded on the Neva renamed it St. Petersburg. The mayor of Moscow has recently installed a statue of the Emperor on the banks of the Moskva River which is as ghastly as it is gigantic. The glorification is understandable, but I am not convinced that Peter is an appropriate model of a statesman for the new Russia. The trouble is that there is none better.

RICHARD PIPES is Baird Research Professor in History at Harvard.

TRB *continued from page 8*

ber, is *führer*.) Clinton could pull off welfare reform and free trade because he had the support of New Democrats and some Republicans. He was also helped by a vibrant wave of experimentation in state governments. If Schroeder attempts to embark on comparably far-reaching reforms, he would have to do it all through federal legislation and would face opposition from his own party, which is still dominated by an unreconstructed left wing led by his designated finance minister, Oskar Lafontaine. And then there are his coalition partners, the Greens, who have advocated such loopy ideas as a tax that would raise gasoline prices to $12 per gallon.

Schroeder and the Social Democrats may surprise us all, embarking on a genuine restructuring of the German economy and welfare state despite the political crosswinds. The more likely scenario, however, is that they will enact the maximum politically acceptable level of cuts—that is, not much.

But, if Germany fails to modernize now, its next recession could be even deeper than the one from which it is now slowly emerging. Friction could grow among the countries of the European Union, as the EU's leading nation becomes less able, and less willing, to subsidize the continent's weaker economies. Politically, Germany could grow more volatile. If their economy stagnates, will Germans question their own unwillingness to sacrifice for the common good, or will they look for scapegoats—EU bureaucrats; their own politicians; the expensive bailout of eastern Germany; the country's seven million foreign residents?

For Americans, there are two morals to this story. The first is one we've already learned from our own battles over Medicare and Social Security. There's a tradeoff in non-means-tested entitlement programs. Extending them to the whole middle class helps secure their political survival for the benefit of the poor, but it makes them politically difficult to reform. Yet, the longer reform is postponed, the more painful it will be. The second lesson is that, for all the complaints about gridlock and divided government, our ramshackle eighteenth-century federal system may actually be better able to handle the social and economic challenges of the twenty-first century than Europe's parliaments. There's no Third Way like the American way.

CHARLES LANE

CHARLES LANE's trip to Germany was paid for by the German Marshall Fund and Pfizer.

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"Do not tell a lie, and whatever you hate do not do it." Thus Jesus answered requests for directions on how to pray, fast, and give alms. Not lying trumps all displays of religion! Truth is never without uncertainty, but a lie is always known to be such by the liar. This is one of 113 sayings of Jesus that have a valid claim to authenticity, not redacted as are those found in the Bible; so concludes Jack Hannah in analyzing the recently discovered ancient Thomas document. A wholly new vista opens upon the historical Jesus, showing that his ethics and theology differed from that developed by his disciples. All pertinent texts and commentary are provided.

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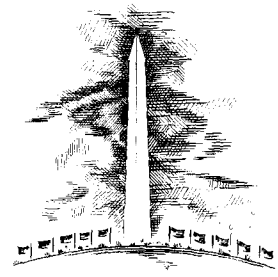
WASHINGTON DIARIST

Call the whole thing off

LAST WEEKEND WAS THE HUNdredth anniversary of George Gershwin's birth, and, to commemorate the event, while seeking refuge from the obscene CD-ROM containing the appendices of the Starr report, I put on the Brooklyn Academy of Music's terrific recording of Gershwin's greatest political operetta, *Of Thee I Sing*. Far from providing an escape from President Clinton's difficulties, however, the musical eerily managed to predict them.

WRITTEN AS A SATIRE OF PRESIDENtial scandals in the Hoover era, *Of Thee I Sing*, which won the Pulitzer Prize for drama in 1932, begins at the convention of the National Party. A journalist named Matt Fulton, who is a cross between Michael Isikoff and Matt Drudge, suggests that the best way to excite the voters and to raise newspaper circulation is to orchestrate a campaign drama that combines sex and politics. Accordingly, the party leaders persuade John P. Wintergreen, the bachelor candidate, to preside over a beauty contest in Atlantic City. Wintergreen promises to propose to the winner in every state in the Union and to marry her at his inauguration. At the moment of truth, however, Wintergreen can't bring himself to wed the winner of the contest, a whiny belle from Louisiana named Diana Devereaux, who is the spitting image of Paula Jones. Instead, he confesses, he has fallen in love with Mary Turner, a young campaign intern, who has a special talent for making corn muffins without corn. "Who cares about corn muffins?" Diana declares. "All I demand is justice." She asks Wintergreen for a public apology: "This jilting me/It cannot be!/This lousy action/Calls for retraction." Wintergreen recklessly ignores her, and, after reenacting his courtship with Mary in each of the 48 states, he is swept into office by a love-crazed electorate.

HERE'S WHERE THE CLINTON PARallels become increasingly uncanny. At Wintergreen's inauguration, the chief justice administers the oath of office and the marriage vows at the same time. The new president sings a fond farewell to all the other Jane Does he used to know, and, in a foreshadowing of Clinton's "60 Minutes" interview in 1992, he promises to remain faithful to Mary. His inaugural address is interrupted by Diana Devereaux, who bursts in to serve Wintergreen with a summons for breach of promise of marriage. "I couldn't see/His jilting me/And so I'm doing/A bit of suing." The chorus of citizens is outraged by Wintergreen's caddishness. "If it's true she has a claim/You should be called a dirty name!" But the Supreme Court justices who have assembled for the inauguration dismiss Diana's suit on the grounds that corn muffins are more important than justice. As the curtain falls on Act I, Diana vows to appeal. "See you in court, y'all!"



AT THE BEGINNING of Act II, Wintergreen finds that his administration is paralyzed by the Devereaux scandal, because reporters refuse to ask him about anything else: "Here's the one thing that the people of America/Are beside themselves to know:/They would like to know what's doing/On the lady who is suing you/Diana Devereaux," the hacks sing. As the effects of the scandal are felt around the globe, the French ambassador announces that France is ready to go to war to vindicate Devereaux's honor because "she's the illegitimate daughter of an illegitimate son of an illegitimate nephew of Napoleon." (If Paula Jones were French, would Jack Lang do any less?) At this point, party leaders in Congress fear that Wintergreen's marriage scandal is threatening their chances for reelection, and they demand his resignation. When he refuses, they vow to remove him from office: "You decline to resign/So we'll teach you/We'll impeach you!"

THE FINALE IS WINTERGREEN'S trial in the Senate. The majority leader reads an impeachment resolution that looks very much like Kenneth Starr's referral to Congress: Wintergreen is to be impeached for lying to Devereaux. Diana herself is called to testify before the Senate, and her song of woe—"Jilted, jilted/I'm a flow'r that's wilted.... Broken, broken/By a man soft-spoken"—brings tears to the lawmakers' eyes. Wintergreen is maddeningly uncontrite: "Impeach me, fine me, jail me, sue me/My Mary's love means much more to me." The senators begin a roll call vote on impeachment, and all seems lost, until Mary suddenly arrives on the scene. Before the vote continues, she wants the Senate to know that she and the president are about to have a baby. "Gentlemen," Vice President Alexander Throttlebottom points out, "the Senate has never impeached an expectant father. What do you say?" "Not guilty!" the weeping senators reply. After the Supreme Court decides the sex of the infant, the French ambassador repeats his threat of war. Suddenly, Wintergreen remembers that, when the president is unable to fulfill his duties, the Twelfth Amendment to the Constitution says that his obligations are to be assumed by the vice president. Throttlebottom happily agrees to marry Diana, and everyone joins in for the final reprise: "Of thee I sing, baby." Rather than relying on Barney Frank to save his presidency, in other words, perhaps Clinton should consider the George and Ira Gershwin strategy. He could confess that he did, in fact, have sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky, and that she is now pregnant with his child. (This can be confirmed by an FBI test.) The president and Monica can follow the announcement with a triumphant 50-state tour, accompanied by the Gershwins' inspired chorus: "Posterity is just around the corner." Everyone will then live happily ever after, as long as Al Gore can figure out what to do with Paula Jones.

PLEASE FORGIVE ME FOR COLLAPSing before the finish line, but it's hard to sustain much relish for satire after scrolling through the Starr appendices, a chilling enumeration of surveillance technologies in the post-privacy state. By pointing and clicking at the CD-ROM, I examined, with growing discomfort, Monica's phone records, her credit card receipts, her e-mail messages, and the records of the toll plaza that she passed through on her way to a job interview at the United Nations. But the dark realities of Depression-era politics defeated even the Gershwins. After reading a description of the Annie Lennox CD that Clinton gave to Monica (Starr misspelled it "Lenox"), I put on the sequel to *Of Thee I Sing*, which opened in 1933. Entitled *Let 'Em Eat Cake*, it closed after only 46 performances, largely because its grim subject matter—a right-wing coup that deposes President Wintergreen's successor, culminating in a global depression and an armed march on Washington led by the Army—wasn't really the stuff of comic opera. Come to think of it, Paula Jones may be the least of Al Gore's troubles.

JEFFREY ROSEN

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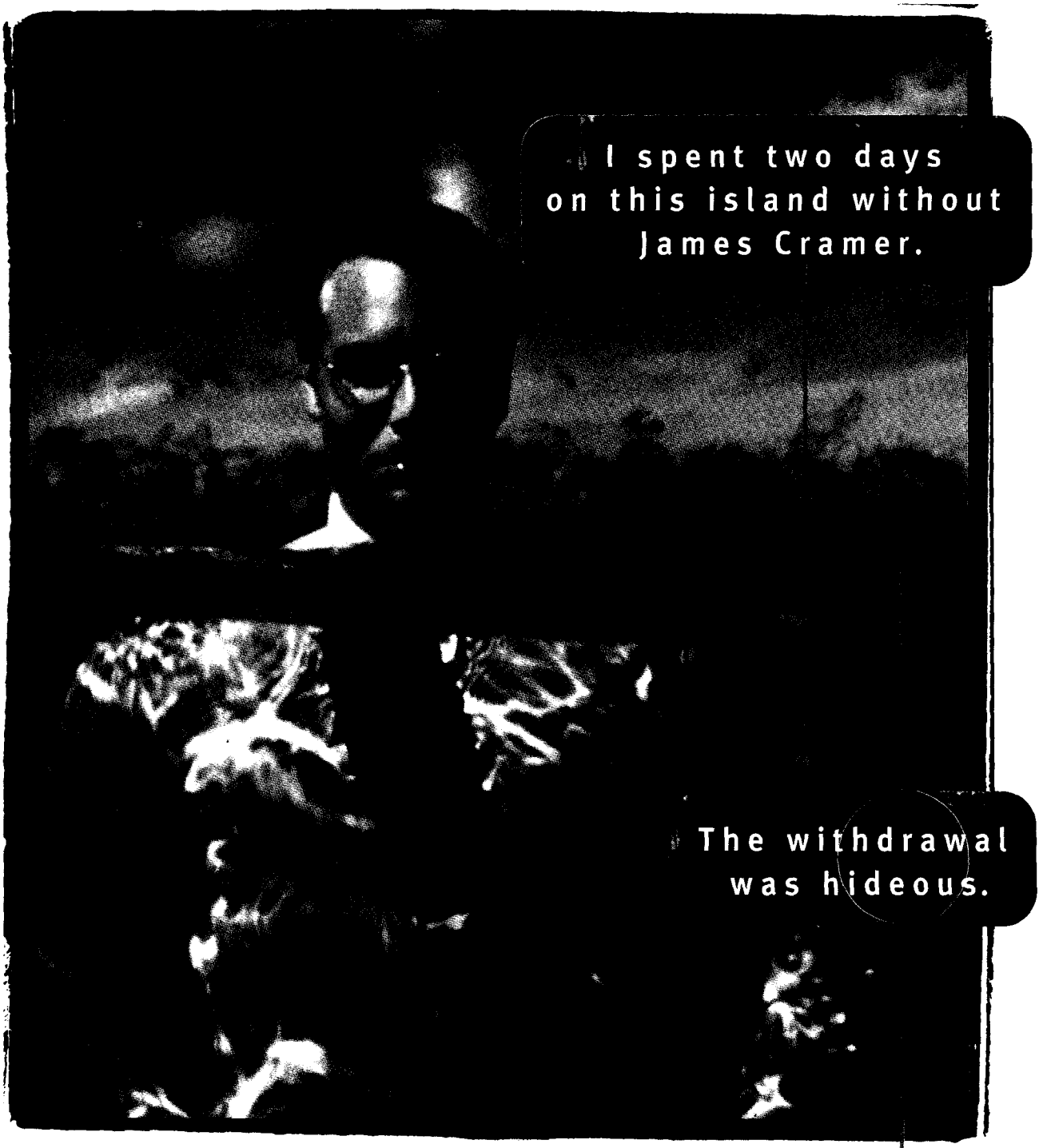

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